The Children of Destiny

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Children of Destiny

BY

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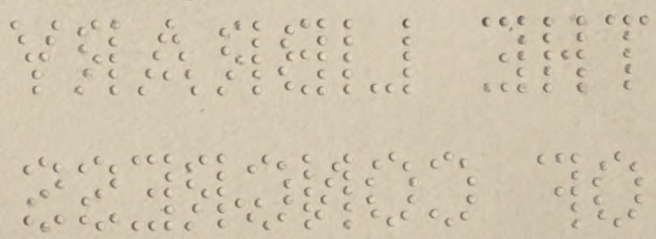

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E. J. L. May 17, 1902.

PREFACE.

PRE-EMINENT on the roll-call of nations in regard to the national classification of industry, the United States boasts moreover of business men who have the grit and energy and tenacity to fight their battles, whether bloodless or bloody; in commerce or in war; at home or in foreign lands. Our country has attained that prosperity when we can compare ourselves with any nation—aye, even with the powerful Britain—in matters pertaining to commerce and pushing business thrift. What less could have been expected in the blending of Puritan and Cavalier; English, French and Dutch into a great educational and commercial commonwealth, whose people are destined to "rise or fall together"?

The author does not offer as an apology the fact that he was only nineteen years of age when the book was written; but the reader will understand that in maturer years he may have a deeper insight into men—their nature and characteristics—and a clearer knowledge of the world in general. No one could well deny that there is an abundance of room for improvement.

Faithfully,

THE AUTHOR.

CHILDREN OF DESTINY.

CHAPTER I.

In the wilds of Central America, in the little State of Maraquapez, one would be surprised to suddenly stumble upon a settlement at the base of a little mountain, as full of life and energy as a town in the States. In a country of such a tropical, lazy climate and such indolent, non-progressive people, the fact of life and energy would, to the modern American, be surprising in itself; but not only did this little village of Velasco assume all of the afore-mentioned life and energy of an eastern factory town, but exhibited on all sides, the unmistakable signs of modern American improvements.

First in importance, a little railway line stretched away through the forests to the seaport towns of San Samanca, which was also the capital of the Republic of Maraquapez. The line was only ten miles long and ran partly through a dense forest, but dividing at intervals great coffee plantations. The "San Samanca and Velasco," or the "S. S. and V." as the owners jestingly termed their railroad, which was fitted up with modern con-

trivances for the increase of speed and locomotive power; and though the passenger trade was comparatively nothing, it was given a passenger coach —more for the benefit of the employees at the mines than for any other purpose.

The "S. S. and V." was built by the Velasco Mining Co., as has been stated, which had opened up the mines, built the little cabins on the side of the mountain for the workmen, and constructed the railroad for the transportation of their mineral products.

The company had started their business twelve months previous, but at this date the real work of mining had just begun. The task of getting into shape had been a difficult one. The first delay occurred when the company made an offer of purchase to the government, and bargained with the rich coffee planters for a right of way.

The indolent government officials and the equally indolent planters were slow men to bargain with. Another trouble lay in securing native workmen. Those of the white people that were compelled to work, always joined the army, and all the hard labor was performed by the Indians. But the Indians were hostile toward foreigners, and only about fifty, that were out of employment, consented, after much wrangling, to hire to the Americans.

The company was compelled to import two hundred workmen from the States—about seventy-five of whom were negroes. And then the building of the road, the construction of the machine shops and cabins, and the clearing away of underbrush occupied considerable time.

The Velasco Mining Co. was formed by stockholders in New York and Maraquapez—all of whom were Americans. A young man named Tremaine Grant was the largest stockholder, and president of the company. The rest of the company were all old men, with the exception of one—a young Southerner, Garland McCain.

Grant and McCain first met at college, where they played on the football team together. A warm attachment had sprung up between the two, but the separation after school days had almost caused them to forget each other.

Grant's father had been a poor business man, although rather lucky in speculation, which had won for him a few thousand dollars, and which Tremaine inherited. This small sum placed Tremaine above poverty, and was enough to give him a good view of the world, and start him in business too.

Grant's desire had always been to see the world; so after his father's death he spent a few years in travel, during which period he had learned a great deal of the speech and manners of the majority of people on the globe. Once he dropped into a concert garden in Vienna, to hear some of the thrilling Viennese music and gaze in admiration on some of the beautiful Viennese girls.

All foreigners are quick to observe any feature of their own country, and Grant was a close observer. He sat down by a young man whom he noticed to be attired in the jaunty dress of his own country. Noting this fact, he glanced at the profile of the face that was turned away from him —evidently deeply interested in the music. He

was satisfied that the young man was of either English or American origin, and it occurred to him that he had seen that profile before. The next moment the face was turned in his direction, and Grant was surprised to meet, in the Old World, his old college chum, Garland McCain.

McCain was glad to see him. He too was traveling about the world studying the people, their customs and their nature; and the old spots made famous by the ancients. After a few remarks, concerning the other and their purposes, the two men quickly decided to change their former plans and travel together. And thus their friendship was continued and strengthened in being fellow travelers in a foreign country.

McCain's father had been a wealthy planter on the Mississippi. Garland himself knew but little of business, and cared still less. When his father died, the heir left his plantations in charge of a general manager, and went on a long voyage around the world. In his luxuriously furnished yacht, called the "Mayflower," he had cruised in all the waters of the old and new continent.

The year after the accidental meeting in Vienna, the two friends cruised along the coast of Central and South America in McCain's yacht; and even went a short way up the Amazon. Just off the coast of Central America, it happened that their coal supply ran short, which necessitated their laying over at San Samanca, the capital of Maraquapez, for a few days.

To the two travelers, who had for a while led the fast life of the Parisians and Viennese, loafing about the capital city of a little Central Ameri-

can State, was rather dull. In order to pass away the time satisfactorily, they hired saddle horses and a guide one day, and rode into the forest to hunt.

When they arrived at the low mountains, where Velasco now stands, Grant made some discoveries, which, after considering the natural formations of the country, induced him to believe that there was much mineral ore in the mountains. A long sojourn in many of the mineral regions of the world and especially the Rocky Mountains, had made him something of an authority in such matters, and McCain did not accept his opinion scornfully, but promised to remain with him in Maraquapez a few days, until they had looked into the matter further.

While they were returning to the city, a thunder storm came up suddenly, as was customary in those regions. The forest, by reason of the numerous dead trees scattered about ready to fall, was, to say the least, a dangerous place to be, in a heavy electrical storm. So the friends hastened toward the nearest hacienda, which, as the guide informed them, was the home of an American—Mr. Hempstead. Feeling sure of a welcome from one of their own countrymen, the young Americans rode hurriedly for Mr. Hempstead's plantation. Arriving there, they dismounted and asked to see the master.

When the two had introduced themselves, Mr. Hempstead greeted them warmly.

Mr. George T. Hempstead, they learned, was, five years before that date, a resident of New York City and quite wealthy, but, like many others,

had speculated and had been fleeced. He lost most of his fortune in one big speculation.

Not wishing to remain where he had been so well-known in the business world, Mr. Hempstead came to Maraquapez, where, with the little money he had saved from the crush, he bought a sugar and coffee plantation. In three years Mr. Hempstead was, so to speak, on his feet again. The sugar and coffee plantation had been a great success. With the profits realized in those three years he had been able to give his children a final wind-up of schooling by an extended tour of Europe and the Orient.

The planter presented his three daughters—the Misses Lillian, Mabel and Miriam. The first was a tall, stately, and dignified young woman, of a quiet and unassuming beauty, the second daughter was much like her sister, except that her manner was more gay and sociable. But the youngest—Miriam—was the fairest of the three, and though a girl of eighteen, was the recipient of much admiration. Her girl friends loved her; the young men worshipped at her shrine, and her father adored her above the rest of his children.

McCain's Southern temperament troubled him on this occasion, for he fell in love with Miriam's beauty and sweet ways, at first sight. To McCain was given the passionate, hot-blooded and fiery ways of his country—the South. Further, he was given what we have doubtless forgotten to state—some poetical talent.

Grant too, was favorably impressed with the beauty, sweetness and intelligence of the younger sister, but he learned that all of the planter's daughters were pretty, sweet and intelligent to a

certain degree, although inferior to Miriam. The elder girls too, had charming manners, and had seen much of the world and good society. They had moved in New York's Four Hundred when their father was one of that city's rich business men, and they had left scores of admirers behind. But each of them declared that society was very futile and foolish, and that they were well satisfied in Maraquapez, and among the best society of the capital city—San Samanca—had found intelligent and sympathetic people.

Mr. Hempstead was not proud of his son. Thomas Hempstead had not shown any distinct signs of superiority in any profession or occupation, except that of lounging on the plaza of San Samanca, and smoking cigarettes—a habit much practiced in that country. But when he sauntered into the parlor to meet the guests, much surprise was shown on all sides, when it was learned that the three young men had been college mates. They had all played on the same football team and, therefore, were great friends in the old days. For it is a fact that science and education are fast travelers, and instead of relating all concerning their studies and standing at college, as was common a long time ago, the college man of to-day has much to tell of football and his great struggles for the honor of the college and the team.

This new fact of Tom's acquaintance with the guests, gave them a stronger place with the family, and yielding to their urgent invitation, the visit was prolonged two or three days. Grant had in mind when he accepted, the belief that ore existed in the country, while McCain desired a better ac-

quaintance with the girl whose beauty had attracted him.

During the time of their stay, they were very delightfully entertained by the Hempsteads. The girls were brilliant conversationalists; Mr. Hempstead interested them by recounting the rich resources of the country and the great fertility of the soil. Tom hunted with them, showed them over the country, and took them to the balls and dinners given by the rich planters, who were mostly of Spanish descent.

One day, Grant mentioned to Mr. Hempstead his belief that mineral ore existed in the mountain he had examined.

"Mineral is certainly there," replied Mr. Hempstead, "in fact some mining has been carried on. Owing to a revolution, however—something very common in this country—the work was stopped. The people here were too indolent to open up the work again. Yes, I have been informed that the yield was enormous, and I have no doubt that the work would have been resumed had the original promoters lived through the revolution."

"Why haven't you pushed the matter and invested in it?" Grant asked.

"Well, to be frank, I haven't the capital to invest in that, and still continue all of my business. I have purchased additional lands and a bank in San Samanca this year, and in order to keep all of that business going, I will have to expend a great deal of money. But I am willing, at any time, to become a stockholder with any honest and stirring business man."

"Suppose we visit the mine again and examine the old shaft?"

So, in company with Tom and McCain, they rode over and examined the old shaft. Besides having taken an extended course in civil engineering at college, Grant's observations among the mines in the west had been beneficial to him. Further investigation convinced him, that, with plenty of capital, a good yield was promised to any one who pushed the business properly. He was satisfied more than ever, that the precious metal existed there.

When the party returned, Grant called a consultation. When they were seated, and cigars passed around, he delivered himself of his opinion.

"I am quite satisfied that the mines, if worked in the right way, will yield the promoters an abundance of ore. I am so fully convinced of this, that I intend to invest all of my own capital, if I can get the right parties to join me in the enterprise. In order to work the mines, it will be necessary to build a railroad to the coast—to San Samanca. Then numerous machine shops and cabins will have to be constructed. It is not my wish to influence you gentlemen to invest in anything that may eventually turn out to be a 'South Sea Bubble.' If you think yourselves, however, that this will turn out to be a lucky investment, I would be pleased to have you form a stock company with myself, and two or three New York friends."

"As I have said before, I am willing to invest," said Mr. Hempstead.

"Well, I don't know much about mining my-

self," admitted McCain, "but I believe Grant does. At any rate, I am willing to risk money on his judgment."

McCain's thoughts had been of Miriam. He had confidence in Grant, as he stated, but whether the mine paid or not, he thought it worth the money to be near her. In other words, McCain "had reached the stage of foolishness in love."

"Very well," said Grant, "I don't think either of you will ever see the day you will regret it. But I warn you that much expenditure must be considered before we will realize any profit—you will see that yourself, when you consider how much must be done in the way of building and getting ready. Could you go with me to-morrow, Mr. Hempstead, to confer with the Secretary of Agriculture and Mines, and the President?"

CHAPTER II.

EARLY the next morning the men drove over to San Samanca in Mr. Hempstead's family carriage. The distance from the plantation to the city was only eight miles, and Miriam Hempstead went with them to see a girl friend of hers—Señorita Inez De Callabaro, the daughter of the Secretary of Agriculture and Mines.

Altering their former intentions somewhat, the party decided to accept the secretary's cordial invitation and spend the whole day with him. Although his daughter was absent for the day on a visit to her cousin in the country, so he explained to them, he would endeavor to do the honors of the house, and see to their comfort as far as it lay in his power.

The secretary was a little old man, very polite and affable, and a favorite of the people, who were used to the true politician and not men whose opinion would not change with circumstances. His political career had given satisfaction to all, and this was quietly demonstrated, by continual support and requests, that he accept much higher positions in the government offices. Mr. Hempstead had spoken highly to Grant of the secretary, and a long residence among the people had taught the planter whom one could trust and not trust, among the

Spanish descended gentry—the better class of Maraquapez society.

After dinner, Mr. Hempstead, Grant and the secretary, repaired to a cool place on the lawn to smoke and discuss the business they had on hand. The polite little secretary listened very attentively to what they had to say. When Grant had concluded, he nodded his head approvingly several times.

"What you have to say is very good," he said, "the mines ought to be worked, yes, and I am sorry my people have not been energetic enough to take hold of the work and carry it through themselves. But since they are not, you should have the mines by all means, and I will do all in my power to have the land sold to you at the figure you mention, but I warn you that the officials here are slow. They have not the get-up of you Americans.

"You say that you will have to telegraph to New York for an expert to come down and examine the mines, and will have to communicate with your friends in that city before you can legalize this offer? Very well. In the meantime I will broach the subject to the officials interested, and see if the offer will be accepted favorably. I have no doubt, though, that it will, because the whites have never opposed your immigration to our country, and opening up our crude wealth."

Tom had hied away after dinner to talk with some friends on the Plaza, and as McCain knew but little of mining and less of government affairs, he accompanied Miriam out to see his yacht. Miriam had been disappointed in not finding the Señorita Inez at home, and requested the poet

to take her out to the "Mayflower," which she declared looked beautiful resting on the clear waters of the harbor.

Miriam was delighted with the modern conveniences of the yacht. McCain smiled to himself as he watched her peering into every hole and corner, as if she were a naval inspector, and getting acquainted with the rough, old sailors, who were as respectful toward her, as if she were a young princess, and they her subjects. Once, upon the main deck, she dropped her handkerchief, and immediately a dozen stalwart frames bumped into each other, like athletes on a football gridiron. Miriam laughed while watching them.

"Wasn't it funny?" she said. "It reminded me of a football game I saw once. Thank you," she said to the seaman who presented her the handkerchief, while he held his cap in his hand. "You need not have taken so much trouble to get it for me, though," and the seaman, on looking upon her bright, sunny face, and listening to her sweet words of thanks, felt himself more than rewarded for the little trouble.

"What a different girl from those I have known," muttered McCain, as he silently followed her about the yacht. "So much like a girl and woman blended into one—and yet—perfectly lovable."

To have seen Miriam going over the yacht, prying into every nook and corner, one would have thought there was little of the woman in her. She examined everything and demanded to know the use of everything—and her curiosity was not assumed, which made it all the more girl-like. But

she tried to cram into her head too much understanding, and the result was, only a confused idea of the working of the machinery, and no perfect recollection of the functions of any one piece.

They dined in state, out upon the deck, with the canvas stretched above, to protect them from the sun's rays. McCain was a lover of the luxurious, and he had his cook bring out the costliest and choicest meats and viands for their refreshment. This order was obeyed to the letter, and the cook was proud of the dinner he had to set before them.

Captain McCarthy was invited to dine with them and, though only a rugged, weather-beaten chief on the seas, the captain surprised the modern young lady by his polite and affable speech. He could tell many tales too of the "Mayflower's" adventures on Oriental seas and in the "land of the midnight sun," wherein McCain came in for a great share of daring and reckless bravery. McCain bore all his visitor's praises modestly, and took occasion to correct the captain when he exaggerated his employer's adventures, and enlarged upon his daring.

McCain's negro valet, Jim, was even more courteous and polite than when one year before that date, his master had entertained a few of the nobility off the coast of Brighton. As Jim had been almost at his best that day, and made himself famous by his sweeping bows and over-polite replies to the questions addressed to him, what could be said of him then, as he bowed and scraped all over the deck, in an effort to show that he had been well bred? It was Miriam's first sight of the Southern darky, and Jim's scrupulous fidelity to his

master and polite obsequiousness, won for his race in the South her good opinion. She did not know that Jim's deferential manner had been obtained only through stern reminding and a free use of profanity.

"How I would like to have lived in the South when I was a little girl, and had my 'Black mammy' as Southern girls do—did you have a black mammy?" McCain smiled.

"The grandmother of that very ebony 'nigger' that stands grinning there, like some of the monkeys back in yonder forest, was my nurse. She was my father's nurse, before me."

"Oh, wasn't that nice! I know that you always see that she never wants for anything."

"Oh, yes. She lives better than any of the negroes on my place, and doesn't have a thing to do but to smoke her pipe and tell tales of the days before the war. Whenever I wander back to the old home, which is very seldom, she always comes up to the house and sees that my housekeeper has everything fixed as she used to when I was a rebellious boy entrusted to her care. And, if everything is not arranged just as she wishes, there is a great row, and she brings her troubles to me, because she knows that I will decide in her favor. She knows just what I like best almost better than I."

"And your country—what is it like?"

"Stretches of level lowland and miles of great cotton plantations," McCain replied. "My home is a broad, white building, with wide verandas, where my father used to sit in his lawn chair and talk of affairs of the neighborhood and cotton—

mostly cotton. Then there is the large, white colonnades, that I used to try to climb, and the large-leaved magnolias in the yard, under whose shade I used to lie at full length and gaze on the broad Mississippi in the distance, and wish that I could board the puffing steamers and sail away—away down to New Orleans, and out upon the great ocean. And I remember the forces of hands in the fields, and the sad, old plantation songs. Those were happy days then, and I got my wish of going out into the world too soon."

The sailors all gathered on deck and lined along the shining brass railing of the "Mayflower" to salute their first captain and raise their caps to his fair guest as they stepped into the long boat to be rowed back to the shore. It was a joy to these rough men, who had smoked their pipes in the shadow of the great wall of China, fought street fights in Melbourne, and drunk the health of the President in the drinking booths of Constantinople, to see again a fair-skinned maid of their own country, even if they could only stand afar and gaze at her, the better part of a warm tropical afternoon.

"Thank you," said Miriam, as McCain carefully lifted her ashore. "I have enjoyed the visit very much. Your men all seem to admire you so much," she added, as they stood watching the sailors row the long-boat back to the yacht.

"Oh, I suppose so," McCain replied indifferently. His eyes were upon the trim little yacht resting lightly in the smooth waters of the bay, but his heart's beating kept time to the measured oar-strokes of the seamen in the long-boat.

Meanwhile, Grant and Mr. Hempstead had gone to see the President, hoping to secure his assistance in the concession and purchase of the land for mining purposes. Señor De Callabaro had sent them to him, stating that he was sure the President would give an attentive ear to their offers, as, in his opinion, they were very reasonable and concessionary to the government.

The sun was getting low, and it was consequently much cooler. Grant had his eyes and ears both open as they drove down the shaded streets. The customs and manners of the people did not differ materially from those of South American towns that he had just visited, but, notwithstanding that fact, he was very much interested in the dark-skinned people and their ways, and the low, white Spanish buildings.

They passed the cathedral. The people were mostly Roman Catholics, and Mr. Hempstead remarked that the cathedral had been standing a great many years. It was long and low, and gray, with colored windows, and a high steeple, in which hung a large bell which rang out far over the town every Sunday morning, commanding its many members to religious services. High up above the street the glittering cross reflected the rays of the departing sun.

"The capitol is a good imitation of our own," remarked Mr. Hempstead, pointing to a white building back among the trees.

"Yes," assented Grant, "but they cannot imitate the great minded patriots that first thundered in our senate—not even some of the latter-day statesmen."

"No, nor does this President remind me of any of our own," replied Mr. Hempstead. "You know that back in our country we have created a vast difference between the words 'politician' and 'statesman.' Well, in my opinion, this President is a politician and not a statesman."

"I would not be surprised to find that the case," said Grant, "nor that all of the government officials of Maraquapez are politicians and not statesmen."

"No. I differ with you there. There are gentlemen among them. They are not very numerous, it is true."

"I am glad that such is the case," said Grant, "my work down here will be just that much easier."

A servant in livery met the two men at the door and took their cards up to the President. He was gone for some time, but finally returned with a message from the President, stating that if they wished to confer with him on business, they would have to call at his office to-morrow at ten.

"Confound him," muttered Mr. Hempstead, as the two retraced their steps down the walk to the carriage. "That is all the answer we need to our proposal. It is just his natural pride and mean disposition that stands in his way. He wants every one to know, and especially foreigners, that he is Laredo, President of Maraquapez. I could almost wish that a revolution would come just to show him how little he is, and how little the people regard him."

"I understand that revolutions are not infrequent here?"

"They certainly are not, and it is my firm opinion that one is preparing itself now. Of course

you need not mention the matter elsewhere, but the people, though apparently loyal, do not like this stuffed up fellow. They love De Callabaro, and they have even sent deputations to him, composed of men from the high and low classes, the senate and the army, to tender him the office of president, if he would sanction a revolution. But De Callabaro is a decent sort of fellow, and too much of a patriot to start a revolution, so he sent them back with an emphatic 'no,' telling them to have patience, and bide their time. If he but gave the word, Laredo would be ousted in a short while with no resistance, unless it were made by the Indians. I don't know how the latter people regard him, but their say in the matter would be much, since they are the majority; and I am afraid that if he opposed your immigration here, and called upon them to stand by him, they would do so, because they are hostile toward foreigners."

"If I were De Callabaro, I believe I would make myself President. I know some fellows up in the States that would not have to be asked to lead a rebellion, if there was the remotest chance of its final success."

"And I know of some men up in the States who would make a better President than Laredo. But it won't concern us who is the President, if we can effect the purchase of that mining land all right."

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Grant and Mr. Hempstead arrived again at the home of the Secretary of Agriculture and Mines, they learned that Miriam and McCain had returned and also the Señorita Inez. Grant was made aware of the latter fact, when in the broad reception room, he found himself standing before a tall, dark-eyed and dark-haired girl, who was introduced to him by that name. The Señorita Inez was pretty, vivacious and graceful; but Grant had met her kind of beauty in both Spain and Mexico, and had passed safely by their charms. Brown eyes and hair were more to his liking—especially a soft and dark brown—just such as Miriam had, he thought, glancing at his countrywoman.

"Are you favorably impressed with our country, Señor?" asked the secretary's daughter, in the soft, languid tones of her country, when she discovered that Grant was seated near her. Señorita Miriam has informed me that you have traveled much."

Grant was glad that even in the society of his handsome friend, the girl had been kind enough to mention to her friend some circumstance relating to himself. It was a good sign that he was not so very easily forgotten.

"Your country is very fertile, and, as I believe,

rich in mineral wealth, Señorita," he replied, taking her fan, "but not yet opened up. Time will disclose the true wealth of the state, and not until then will much progress be made. Your climate is mild and pleasant, and I notice that there are some very beautiful ladies in Maraquapez. But you must remember that I have not been here very long, and have not yet had time to discover all the advantages and virtues of the country."

"Nor its vices, I am afraid."

"In my country, Señorita, the law considers a man innocent of a charge until proven guilty. Until I find Maraquapez guilty, I shall consider her innocent."

"You are merciful, but I am afraid that it will not be long before you learn much more than you know, and enough to convict us."

"Maraquapez will not be alone in that respect, then. There is another feature I have forgotten to comment upon—the beautiful music made by the band in the Plaza.

"Do you wish to go out upon the veranda and listen?" she asked.

"Yes. If you wish to go," replied Grant, and after motioning for Miriam and McCain to follow the señorita, led the way out upon the veranda.

This time Grant found himself seated next to Miriam, and was not sorry. Like McCain, he had found the girl very different from those he had known. He had mixed in the society of girls at home who, owing to the free use of artificial mixtures, had transformed themselves from frights to pretty women, and whose tongues were as prone to lie as tell the truth. They always left the im-

pression that they were little less than beautiful princesses, in whose society one was much honored.

"What a pity," thought Grant, "that some sensible and strong-minded men are deceived and take this sort of creatures into their homes."

Miriam was young, only eighteen, and did not understand the ways of the world. At times she seemed a woman with more practicability than common in a girl of her age. She loved her dogs and ponies, and her family—that was the extent of her affection. Only the simple questions of home and her friends bothered her. She never troubled herself with the deeper questions of love and disappointment, because she was unacquainted with either.

The poet leaned far over the banisters as if to catch every tremor of the soft and languid notes of the violins. For the Southern violinist portrays the passionate, hot-blooded temperament of his people quite naturally, and the music is more than inspiring.

So Grant thought as he sat by Miriam and listened and breathed in the wild love song played by the musicians. It occurred to him that he himself had been much of a laggard in love affairs. It was time, he thought, that he was thinking seriously of that future which seemed to him to be so vague and uncertain.

But Grant was not too much wedded to business to understand that "falling in love and being in love" was not altogether a business proposition. He knew, in fact, that love smacked less of business than anything else. And he was not so far sold to business that he could sell his heart.

"Did you meet the President to-day, Mr. Grant?"

"I did not. His Excellency was not at home to us."

"His not being 'at home' does not surprise me," she observed. "I had quite a silly debate with his Excellency once. He asked me, in an insinuating tone, why Spanish girls were prettier than American girls. I know it wasn't right for me to get angry but I could not help it. I told him that it was probably another example of what the snake typified—a treacherous beauty. I added also that beauty was generally given to the least progressive people—Spain and Italy for example—probably as a reward for being so unkind to them otherwise."

"That was an apt reply—what did he say to that?"

"He bit his lip and turned away. But I know he hasn't forgotten that, and I know he would get revenge in some way if he could. He hates me anyway."

"I think he hasn't much love to spare for foreigners. But what caused him to make the broad assertion that Spanish girls are prettier than American girls? It is not so, you know."

"Don't you think they are prettier than Americans? Take the Señorita Inez there for instance —isn't she very pretty?"

"I acknowledge that the Señorita Inez is very good looking. But I know an American girl not far from where she sits that is much prettier than the señorita," Grant said smilingly and gazing at Miriam.

"Oh," she said smiling, "I suppose that is meant for me. I thank you, but I am afraid it was meant in a spirit of flattery."

"Oh, no. I am a very sincere person as you will learn after we become better acquainted."

"I am afraid that if you wish to convince me of that fact you will have to go about it in a better way. You will have to retract the statement just uttered or explain that your judgment is very poor."

"I retract nothing and I claim to be a good judge of beauty. But of course my word adds but little testimony to the many that have already assured you that you are prettier than the native white girls."

"If there are any that have made that bold assertion, I attribute it as I have your words to a desire to be pleasant at the expense of truth."

McCain meanwhile had little eyes or ears for anything but the music. He was one of those wild, imaginative sort of fellows, who are geniuses and really good at the core. Edgar Allan Poe is another example and both possessed the same characteristic. Music, especially the music of the violin, and poetry are closely allied, and in the music McCain heard all of the passionate wild impulses that flitted through his brain.

When Tom returned it was late and the visitors decided that it was time for them to return. McCain and Grant explained to the señorita that they had highly enjoyed themselves, and would accept the secretary's invitation to call again.

"I hope we shall see more of you both," said the señorita in her soft dulcet tones. "If you

decide to stay in Maraquapez we will be glad to have you call."

Until late that night the two young men and the coffee planter sat and talked of their plans in regard to the new company they were attempting to form.

"If our plans are carried through, I shall ask to be made resident director," said Grant; "I am quite sure I can accomplish the work, and it is time I should turn my attention to something. If I ever intend to make anything of myself, it is certainly not too early."

"Well, I think as much about myself," said McCain. "Here have I been wandering about doing nothing when I should have been at work. What can I do?"

"You need not do anything but see after the shipments at New Orleans."

"Oh, I want something hard. I want to come down here, you know, and get out in the weather and keep my health straight. I want rough jobs where I can get tanned from exposure and where I can grow as stout as a blacksmith."

"Well, you can come down here, then, and act as a sort of assistant. Then you can pick out any hard work you want," said Grant. "If my opinion of these people is correct, I am afraid we will have trouble in securing workmen."

"I am afraid you will have to import all your labor from the States," said Mr. Hempstead; "or at least most of it. The white people here won't work, and the Indians won't work for Americans unless they can't find employment elsewhere."

"Well, I think we can make it all right in our

country. Our people always have an eye open for some new country. But I see that it will be necessary for McCain and me to go to New York, and we might as well start to-morrow. While we are there, we can do the work we intended doing by telegraph."

The next morning the young ladies went with Tom and Mr. Hempstead to San Samanca to see the young men off; or, as Lillian said, to keep Tom from stopping along the road to bet on some rooster fight or dog race.

Amidst a chorus of good-byes the two young men were rowed to the yacht, the anchor lifted and the journey homeward resumed. Grant and McCain each stood with a glass in hand upon the quarter-deck, and each man's eye rested upon the figure of a girl in white organdie, who stood at one side of the group on the wharf and waved a white handkerchief after the departing "Mayflower."

CHAPTER IV.

GRANT'S work had been highly successful. The company was formed, the lands bought of the Government, and a reasonable tax agreed upon, and now, after twelve months had gone by, the work showed gratifying results.

President Laredo, as was expected, objected strongly to the sale of the land, and tried every possible way to prevent the bargain. But, happily for Maraquapez, the President's authority is not as powerful as the ruler of an absolute monarchy, so the land was finally secured through the valuable assistance of Señor De Callabaro.

Grant was the first to return to Maraquapez. McCain left him at New Orleans, and while Grant resumed his journey on an ocean steamer, McCain traveled through the South in search of more workmen. In a month he left for San Samanca with the required number of laborers on board his yacht. He had come back to assist Grant in the mines, he explained to every one, but it did not take a shrewd person to understand that he had something else in view also. Whether that was McCain's reason for returning or not, it was soon observed that he spent much more time with the Hempstead girls, listening to the band playing in the Plaza, or at some social event

where they happened to be. He was rarely at the mines in the daytime.

Grant, on the other hand, had accomplished a great deal of work since he had been appointed director general.

He had cut a pathway and run his railway through the jungles and plantations. He had cut the trees and underbrush away from a part of the mountain and had torn great chasms in the ground. He had built twenty-five or thirty cabins near the base of the mountain, besides a post-office and commissary, several machine shops and two or three carpenter and blacksmith shops. The "S. S. and V." terminated in front of the post-office, and just across the road he built a cottage for himself and assistants. The cottage was low, with but a narrow veranda and a front room reserved for an office. The office contained a long table and a roller-top desk; maps and charts were scattered all over the room. It was here that Grant held daily consultations with McCain, Hamilton, the general foreman, and Collins, the chief engineer, much like army officers in a war campaign.

Hamilton was a young miner whom Grant had met while traveling in the mining regions. The young fellow's ingenuity and mining knowledge at such an early age had attracted the New Yorker, and he engaged the young man to preside as foreman of the works.

Hamilton was a sort of "diamond in the rough." His education was limited, but he had enough to keep him from being uncomfortable in good society, and to be of assistance to him in solving

mathematical problems. He had seen little of the best side of life and a great deal of the rough; a long residence in the rough mining regions of the West had taught him to be as quick and cool in hitting an enemy as in shaking hands with a friend. Fighting had been such a common thing back in the days when he was a cowboy on the Texas plains that he did not find it necessary to become excited over it.

Collins, the engineer, was an old man to whom machinery was a mere toy, and the art of mining and railroading mere play. Both Grant and Hamilton always consulted with him before undertaking a difficult task, and they learned that his plans were generally the best. Like Hamilton, Collins had come from the West, where he had been associated with mines and mining for many years. Collins had superintended many difficult pieces of engineering in his day, and had been consulted upon as many more.

Late one afternoon, while Grant was seated in his office, he heard a light step upon his threshold, and turning, he was considerably surprised to see Miriam standing in the doorway. She was dressed in a riding habit, and held a tiny riding-whip in her hand. Miriam was an enthusiastic horsewoman and was never better pleased than when in company with her pet dogs, she rode over the country—sometimes at full speed. Neither of her sisters would ride with her much—they claimed that it was so unladylike. Tom was too lazy to ride anywhere, unless it was absolutely necessary, or there was enough fun in it to justify his taking so much trouble. Grant was always too busy, and

so it was left to McCain to assist her in that pleasure.

"I have come to ask you to go riding with me," Miriam announced. "You have promised, you know, and I hold you a man of your word."

"But I did not promise for this evening," said Grant, trying to "crawfish" out of it. No one would have enjoyed a horseback ride with her more, but he had denied himself all pleasure until he had his business fixed solid, which would take about a month yet. "I can't leave the mines this evening."

"Well, I have waited long enough. I will make this proposal, however. If you do not want to ride with me, I will cancel that debt if you will show me over the mine."

"I see that I shall have to do so," said Grant; "not but that it will be a pleasure, but the mines are dirty and sooty."

"I don't care. I am willing to sacrifice a dress for that much knowledge—and of course pleasure," she added hastily.

"You speak as if the pleasure would be subordinate to the knowledge.'

"Oh, no—knowledge, or the search after knowledge, is pleasure to me."

"Oh, I see," and Grant felt that he did not make anything by his reminder.

So he escorted her over the mines—or at least all the places where he thought she might be safe to go and escape criticism from her sisters. But this he learned was not to be done, because she informed him that her sisters would be angry with her for venturing anywhere near the mines at all,

if she would but be kind enough to mention the fact to them, which she declared she would not do.

But regardless of the fact that the mines were "forbidden fruit," she enjoyed the "inspection," as she termed it, very much. Her curiosity was unusual in a young lady, for, as a rule, women care little about men's work—or at least feminine women. Those unfortunate creatures termed "masculine women," of course, are very curious about men's affairs, if they see any chance of imitating the same, and thus lose their femininity and former charms.

"I at least have one thing that I can boast of, and that is curiosity," she said to Grant by way of apology. But Grant, looking down at her as she stood, holding her skirt out of the coal-dust at the mouth of the hole, with her hat pulled low over her eyes, and flipping a speck off her riding skirt with her riding-whip, thought that she had other, more charming, characteristics.

"If I should ever be so fortunate as to find a woman I could really love and marry," said Grant, "I would wish her, among other things, to take an interest in my work. That would make the work just that much pleasanter."

"But what if it were her nature not to take an interest in what you do?"

"Oh, I don't suppose I would let a little fault like that separate us. My nature is just this: When I love a woman truly, I am blind to all her faults and quick to see her virtues."

"So is all true love."

Meanwhile McCain, from the post-office, had

noticed her horse standing before the gate, and he came out just as the "inspection" was completed, and they were returning down the hill.

"I am learning a great deal now, Mr. McCain," announced Miriam. "I think that in a short while I can operate one of your big engines—if Mr. Grant would only trust me not to blow up the mines."

"Are you thinking of going into the mining business, Miss Miriam?"

"If I continue taking lessons from Mr. Grant and yourself, it will not be long before I will be competent to perform Mr. Grant's duties. But it is getting late, and I must return home—unless Mr. McCain will go riding with me, and see that I get safe home?"

"Oh, I will ride a while with you," said McCain. The poet had something to tell her, and he knew of no better time than this. He could not hold out any longer against the feeling within him, and though he knew that upon her answer depended his future happiness, he was so tossed about with fears that he had decided to speak and learn his fate.

While McCain and Grant were standing by the gate talking to her, Hamilton and Collins came up from their work in the mines. As they were both covered with coal-dust and grime, they did not stop, but passed through the gate and on to the bathroom. There was a fixed look of determination on Hamilton's face as he raised his wide Panama hat, more as if assisting at some church function than merely saluting a lady acquaintance. Once upon a time Hamilton had been much in

society; but now he could not help feeling a little unsafe as to whether he was exactly in trim for them when he ventured near. A great deal of this bashfulness had worn off since he had been at Maraquapez. In the society of the Señorita Inez and the pleasant daughters of the American coffee planter, he was made to feel at ease.

CHAPTER V.

"McCain seems to 'have it bad,'" remarked Hamilton, as he sat down to supper with Grant and Collins.

"His manner betrays that fact," replied Grant, as his eyes rested for a moment upon a chart that hung upon the wall. "And McCain doesn't seem to be the only one. If I were so disposed, I might mention the name of some other person that could be so accused."

"Here, Maloney, these eggs are not fried as I want them!" Hamilton hurriedly exclaimed to the cook. But the other two were allied against him, and the poor fellow was doomed to suffer.

Hamilton of late had been going often to town —to hear the band play, as he carefully explained to Grant and Collins—but in reality to call on the Señorita Inez. Grant and Collins had "smelled a rat," but they said nothing to the foreman, and awaited events.

So matters went on until one night they—quite accidentally, of course—caught up with him and learned why of late he had cultivated such a taste for music—it could not have been natural with him, for he had often during the first of the year, stated his dislike of anything musical.

They had ridden over to San Samanca purposely to hear the music, and while strolling about the Plaza were surprised to see Hamilton there

with the Señorita Inez. The couple were seated upon a bench in the light of the street lamp, and were apparently very much more interested in each other than the music.

Afterward Hamilton was the recipient of much jesting when the party sat down together at meal time or congregated after supper on the little veranda.

Although of a different nationality, the señorita was a pretty and intelligent girl. On the other hand, Hamilton was a square-jawed, determined young fellow, like Grant. He was not altogether a bad looking fellow either; was true American, and the sort of fellow that captivates the fair sex in foreign countries.

"What other person do you refer to?" Collins inquired, smiling grimly.

"One friend of ours, by name called Frank Hamilton."

"Oh, I say, boys, I've told you that I am not crazy over the girl. I like her well enough—it does a rough fellow like me lots of good to associate with a nice intelligent girl like her."

"You seem to think that it does you lots of good, judging from the frequency of your visits," remarked Grant.

"I'll bet that isn't a part of the nice compliments he pays her when they are alone," added Collins. "Say, Frank, do you make love in Spanish or English?"

"See here; you fellows carry the joke too far. Suppose the señorita should get hold of all this talk? She'd think I had been 'telling tales out of school.'"

"Don't be at all uneasy," assured Collins. "We envy you your luck—the señorita is not a 'bad one.'"

But Hamilton had strolled away, whistling "Go 'way back and sit down," which was his usual method of dismissing the subject.

A few moments later he rejoined them in the office, arrayed in spotless white duck, and boldly announced his intention of going up to the city.

"What for?" Collins asked laconically.

"None of your business, if you are anxious to know," Hamilton returned testily.

"Oh, well, don't get angry. I know how it is. I have been all along there, and I heartily sympathize with you, my son." Hamilton would not stay for any further remarks, but rushed out of the door.

"Get back here by morning," Collins called after him; "I will need you to help me with that new drill, and, say, kindly give the señorita my best regards."

"Confound them," Hamilton muttered to himself, "if they keep on I'll get mad and marry the girl just to have done with their infernal foolishness."

While he was riding along and whistling softly to himself, and seriously considering the above proposition, it suddenly occurred to him that a thunder cloud had spread quickly over the horizon and shaded the moon from view. It was also evident that if he did not race for some farmhouse or other place of shelter, he would be exposed to the mercy of the elements.

So he gathered up his reins and spurred his

horse to a gallop. It was fully a mile to the next house, and though that was only an old Indian cabin, it would be much safer than the woods in a thunder storm.

The clouds gathered thick and fast, and the thunder rolled. Vivid flashes of lightning blinded him until his eyes became used to the glare, when he was suddenly aware that his horse had left the road, and he was lost beyond the shadow of a doubt! Lost in the dense forest in a part of the country he knew nothing of, with a heavy thunder storm fast approaching.

Hamilton dismounted, and leaving his horse standing in his tracks, crawled about on his hands and knees, feeling for the wagon ruts of the road and taking advantage of every flash of lightning to make a sweeping glance about him. It was too dark to see anything.

His search for the road proved a failure. A prolonged play of lightning revealed his horse standing about twenty feet away. Suddenly there came an unusually sharp clap of thunder, and the animal becoming frightened, dashed away through the woods at full speed.

Hamilton was a very unromantic chap, and at this moment he could not suppress, even with God manifesting His power about him, an expression of "Damn it!"—which was intended to include both the horse and the situation.

As the horse was gone, he could do nothing better than to turn his mind to the situation. The latter was certainly not a matter to joke about. He was alone and lost in a dense jungle, with a thunder storm right on him. He did not know

which direction to take in order to reach the nearest habitation. All he could do was to stumble on in the hope of reaching some sort of a shelter before the dead trees began to fall. If he could only find a cave, which he knew to be numerous in the mountain regions—or even an open place in the woods, he would have nothing to fear but stray limbs borne along by the force of the wind. But as he would have to fall into the mouth of a cave to discover one in the darkness, and an open place was infrequent, he did not live in much hope of these.

Just as the storm introduced itself by a few large drops of rain and a cooling gust of wind, Hamilton was conscious of a faint light about a hundred yards ahead, that shone through the trees like a little star of hope. He pushed on toward it, stumbling over fallen trees, tearing through thick clusters of undergrowth, and sometimes even running directly against a standing tree.

When Hamilton ran up near the light, he observed that it was shining through a crack in the walls of an old temple that had been built years before by the old pagan Indians. Although a rough piece of architecture, the temple had proved its stability by the number of years it had breasted the elements, and, although crumbling in places, was still standing almost as entire as ever. Hamilton remembered having seen this old temple before, though he knew nothing of its locality except that it was situated in the wildest region of the country. He had known that it was inhabited only by bats and wild animals, as it was a common belief among the natives that it was

the rendezvous of the spirits of the old Indians that had worshipped beneath its roof. Some of the Indians stated that they had seen lights, just as Hamilton did then, gleaming through the cracks in the wall, and no Indian or Meztiso could be bribed to go within. The fear of wild animals, coupled with this ghost tale, had kept the whites from ever exploring the old temple.

Hamilton silently acknowledged to himself that he was up against a serious proposition. He was not superstitious, although there was something uncanny about the appearance of the light at this time and kind of night that made him feel a little awed. But he was afraid to venture into the dark and crumbling ruins, where all kinds of wild and fierce animals, reptiles and poisonous insects were known to swarm.

So he stood for a moment at the torn-down entrance door and debated the question. Although the temple had stood a great many years, it might fall at any moment, he thought. The walls were still standing, apparently as firm as ever, but so compactly was the house put together it was destined, like the 'one horse shay,' to fall to pieces all in a heap, beneath which a person would have no more chance of escape than beneath a Rocky Mountain land slide.

Hamilton took a long survey of the great mass of black clouds that were moving swiftly toward him. In a moment the storm would be upon him. The thunder burst into loud peals just overhead, and rumbling about the heavens, died away in the distance, while the quick, continued flashes

of lightning showed the swaying of the branches above.

Just then the vanguard of the storm swept by, and a great tree falling near, decided Hamilton to seek shelter in the old temple where he would at least be secure from the rain storm that was sure to follow.

CHAPTER VI.

HAMILTON stepped boldly into the entrance, and after securing a strong foothold, peered into the gloom to see if the fiery eyes of any wild animal were shining in the passageway. Seeing nothing but impenetrable darkness, he walked cautiously forward.

He first took the precaution, however, to draw one of his revolvers and cock it—ready for instant use. He silently thanked himself for his forethought in bringing the weapons along.

He proceeded slowly. The stones used for the ground floor had been loosely laid together. Some were uneven and in places removed. He was afraid that if he rushed on too fast he might precipitate himself head-foremost against the floor, or bump against some rough angle of the wall. Besides he was nervous as he thought of what might be in a corridor ready to spring upon him. Out in the open, where there was plenty of light, he would not have been afraid. Back in the days when he was a Texas cowboy no one on the ranch was as handy with a revolver as he.

In the entrance corridor he was safe from the storm as it was, unless the old building suddenly tumbled down upon him.

Outside the storm was raging in all its glory, and those who know will acknowledge that a Cen-

tral American storm is not a joke or the parody of a storm,—and Maraquapez lay in the great storm region, too.

Hamilton suddenly conceived an idea that he would like to see who was in the temple above and what was going on. He argued that it must have been some person, as a light was burning, and that they had frightened all the ferocious animals out of the building. He was not like the Indians in respect to lights. It was his opinion that where there was a light there was bound to be something human. Probably it was his opinion that phantoms would not afford an expenditure for oil or candles when they did not need them and looked so much prettier in the dark.

At any rate, he proceeded on down the corridor until he came to another corridor running at right angles to the one he first entered. At the corner he halted and looked up and down the one he had just entered. At one end he saw the light gleaming down a rickety staircase against the opposite wall of the corridor, and in this direction he continued. Arriving at the foot of the stairs, he halted and stood for a moment, considering how to act.

He could see that the light proceeded from an open door about five feet beyond the head of the stairs, and from that room came also the sound of a voice, which was partly drowned by the roaring of the storm outside. Hamilton was no coward, but the ghostly sound of the voice for a moment made him decide to go back and let the mystery go unexplained. Then he remarked bravely to himself that as ghosts were but the produc-

tion—created solely from the minds of half-foolish people—of the imagination, he would have nothing to fear but human or animals, and as he had fought these often before, he was not afraid to have another encounter with them, if it became necessary.

But he was not so foolish as to rush boldly in and face the results of such an act. Without making a particle of noise, he placed his foot upon the stairs, pressed, and finding them to be safe, stole quietly up them and took his position to one side of the open doorway. Quietly removing his hat, he peered around the jagged side of the door, and at one glance understood the state of affairs.

The room was a long hall, with a platform at the far end, and it reminded him of the old school house where he had received his first knowledge, back in the States. Upon this platform stood the figure of an idol—a curiously-carved god that had been worshipped by the Indians in the temple's youthful days. It was the supposed figure of a giant man—or a part man, for the lower part of the figure was carved into an indistinct mass, assuming no human shape or form. The figure had but one eye, and what surprised Hamilton the most was that it really was an eye, and that the lips were moving in a slow chanting tone of speech. Bowing before this figure in even lines, like soldiers, was a great horde of the native Indians, dressed and painted in grotesque costumes and inhuman features—and great spots of paint had been scattered on the face of the idol. The foolish Indians were bowed down with their faces to the floor, like a pious Mohammedan be-

fore his shrine, and no Arab's African slave could have been more humble toward their master than they were to the god.

Hamilton's practical mind was not long in deciding that some person was practicing a deception on the superstitious Indians, and he even fancied that the voice of the man in the idol was familiar to him.

But what surprised him most was the fact that the Indians had been worshipping their idols so secretly that no one among the whites had known anything about it. He now understood why they had spread the report that the temple was haunted, and he confessed to himself that they were as sharp a people as the Indians back in the States, and though the story of the lights seen through the cracks in the building was quite true, they had taken the light there themselves. In a desire to ferret out this mystery and learn who was the idol, if that could be accomplished without making the fact of his presence in the temple known to any one, Hamilton forgot the storm and studied the situation. He observed that at the farther end of the hall, and just behind the idol, there was a little door, and he thought that if he could but reach the room into which that door opened he might be able to slip into the large room unobserved and hide behind the statue. He would then be in the rear of the man in the idol, and, as the Indians were bowed down in reverence with their faces to the floor, they would not be likely to see him, as for a moment he would be exposed while slipping from the little door to the rear of the statue.

He noticed that a corridor ran along the end of the room where he was standing, and that at the corner of the room on the exterior side, of course, this corridor connected with another running at right angles and bounding the left side of the room, facing the statue.

He stole softly along this route, and was glad when he found that the last-named corridor opened into the room at the farther end of the worshipping room. Into this room he glided as quietly as one of Nick Carter's assistant detectives, and a moment later was standing just to one side of the open door behind the statue. Another glance at the room informed him that his plans could be carried through safely, and silently he passed into the assembly room and seated himself behind the statue, where he could see and hear all that was going on without being seen himself. Having made this move in safety, he laid both revolvers at his feet and listened attentively to what the voice in the idol was saying.

"Why do they come down here to rob you of the wealth that is truly yours?" said the voice; "the wealth that was your fathers, and your fathers' fathers? Do you go to their country and rob them of their wealth? No! But they come here and dig up your land and take your minerals. They buy your land for a trifle from traitors at the capital and make themselves rich off of your wealth, while you stand by and say nothing. They sit in the shade and do nothing, while you, fools that you are, work like dogs in the hot sun and get nothing for it but enough to live

upon. They live like kings upon the bread and the wine that you have made for them, while you, like curs, eat the crust that they throw to you.

"Once there was a great people that dwelt upon your land. They fought the foreigners and drove them from their shore, and when their numbers were not strong enough to fight them in the open field, they drove their daggers into them as they slept and threw their bodies to the alligators in the lakes. But those were noble men. The gods loved them for their bravery and gave them plenty. But they are dead and you—you, like the cowardly dogs that you are, lick the hand that smites you!"

The idol paused. Hamilton tried to remember who was the owner of the voice, but failed utterly. But from around the edges of the idol he could make out the identity of some of the Indians, even through their paint, and was not surprised to notice in the group some of the most rebellious of the native workmen at the mines. In the front row he saw the three most troublesome and the three richest of the Indians—Paoquaz, Roderigo and San Miguel. The latter stepped forth at the voice's last words and said:

"I am ready—my people are not women. Whom do the gods will I should strike first?"

"Go back and bow your face again to the ground. You are brave, but you are not wise; but the gods are glad that there is one among your number who is valiant and ready to strike; for the gods have been angry. Your brothers in the North have struck, and also your brothers in the South. But you—you have been idle."

"We are ready!" the kneeling Indians shouted in chorus.

"The gods are glad. To-morrow Paoquaz, Roderigo and San Miguel will go to the President and tell him how you have been abused by these Americans. Tell him how you have been kicked and cuffed, and borne it all. Tell him that if he will send his army and run them out of the country, and the whites rise against him, that you will stand by him to the last. Then upon the day following, just after the big parade, you will march—every man of your race—up to the reviewing stand and remind the President of his past good services and offer him in the name of your people, the dictatorship of all Maraquapez. And if the white people rebel at this, you will stand by the President. The gods will soften the heart of the President for you, and though he may not promise anything at first, he will do as you desire if you make him dictator. Two weeks from to-day he will send his army down and wipe out the Americans—if you will be brave and fight them yourselves.—Will you do this?"

"We will!" they shouted together.

"Then the gods are pleased. But come no more to this temple until you have smote the Americans, and if you do not do this, and stand by the President and ask him to be dictator, the gods will come and stretch their hands over your people, and the fever will seize them, and they will all die. The gods have spoken."

Just at that moment another God had a little to say, and His say caused great confusion. A heavy gust of wind blew through the corridor and

open door into the room. The wind came so suddenly and forcibly that it upset the statue, but happily not upon the American hidden behind it. It fell to one side, and Hamilton fell quickly with it, to escape detection, and with an eye peering over the neck watched developments.

The Indians all made a rush for the door when they became convinced that the statue had fallen. They jammed each other out, and in a very short while Hamilton heard the footfalls of the last one running from the building.

At the same time he noticed that the person in the idol was coming out, and determining to capture this one, he waited with pistol in hand. What was his surprise to find that it was Laredo, President of Maraquapez!

CHAPTER VII.

At the same moment, his quick eye took in another fact by following the President's fixed look into the middle of the room. A ferocious jaguar was standing just where the Indians had a moment before bowed their head in reverence to the supposed god, and by his attitude, Hamilton knew that he was about to spring upon Laredo. The lamp had by some miraculous means managed to stay lit in spite of the wind, and for a moment Laredo and the beast stared at each other—the one in awe and the other in anger and with a desire for vengeance—vengeance for the death of her young one which had been killed by a falling tree outside.

"If I let the tiger spring, that man's career is ended and we will be let alone hereafter," thought Hamilton.

But the good in him prevailed just at the last moment. As the jaguar leaped into the air, the former cowboy raised his weapon and fired, and the beast lay quivering in the throes of death at the President's feet.

The President, who had lain too frightened to move, sprang to his feet and turned on his rescuer.

"You?" he cried, frightened that Hamilton may

have heard and seen all the preceding occurrences. But his self-possession returned as he thought that perhaps he had only arrived on the scene at that moment. Indeed, he was quite certain that he would have seen Hamilton had he been in the room when he was acting the part of an incensed god. "I thank you, señor."

"Don't thank me," said Hamilton; "thank my mother for her lessons to me back in God's country. Thank her for teaching me to 'do unto others as I would have them do unto me.' It isn't because you are plotting to ruin and perhaps murder me and my friends that I saved your life."

"Where were you when I was in the idol?" Laredo asked gruffly.

"I was near enough to stab you to the heart without being seen or heard," Hamilton replied.

"You have heard all that has passed, then. You have fair warning to leave."

"The country I am proud to call my birthplace," said Hamilton, "once fought a long and bloody war with a nation much her superior in population and armament, and triumphed. That country was many hundred years old then, and was at least a hundred times larger than your own. We have grown since then in both size and population. We employ more men, just to fight our battles than you have population. You are not fighting a few American colonists down here—you are fighting that great nation known as the United States, and her vengeance is swift and sure."

"You talk well, but you little know the person you are speaking to. When I have once sworn

anything I never get frightened at threats. I have sworn."

"Sworn to the devil! What if I go to those misguided wretches and tell them how you have deceived them, and caused them to believe they were being guided by a god! What if I tell them that your double ambitious object is to make yourself an absolute ruler of this country, and get rid of men that you have made your enemies at the same time! Do you think they will believe the Americans to be their enemies then, or the man who is scheming to make them his slaves?"

"Tell them what you wish. You are greatly mistaken if you think they will accept your word in preference to mine."

Hamilton was silent a moment. He knew that the villain had spoken truly, and that the Indians would side with Laredo.

"Your career up yonder at the capital of this State ought to have made them acquainted with your character sufficient not to trust your word for anything."

"And then a Central American never forgets a blow that has been struck him."

"Who has struck them? If you prove that any American at the mines has struck an Indian a single blow, you may take this Smith & Wesson revolver in my hand and blow my brains out with it."

"There are two ways of striking my countrymen," said the President.

"I feel like striking you one of those ways," said Hamilton, "a good one just behind the left ear."

During this discussion Hamilton had held the muzzle of his revolver pointing toward Laredo, but now in his just anger he unwisely dropped the muzzle so that it pointed toward the floor instead.

That was the chance Laredo had been waiting for. Were this man dead before given a chance to leave the building everything would be just as it was before he came upon the scene. And if he were not killed all of his dark schemes would be frustrated, and he, Laredo, would be forcibly thrust from the office that he already held, and doubtless thrown into prison. Laredo had as little gratitude as any person on the globe, and as little regard for the life of others. Such a deed as murdering the American for his own private gain would cause him but little uneasiness afterward, nor any remorse of conscience.

When he saw Hamilton lower his revolver, he ducked his head and made a lunge for the young American's knees. He struck Hamilton's thigh with his shoulder as if he were making a tackle in a football game instead of an attempt upon his captor's life, and the force of the blow, coupled with its unexpectedness, carried the assaulted man back a step or two. He had almost regained his balance and would have soon had the President in his power again, had he not suddenly tripped on an uneven stone and fell backward. In his fall Hamilton's head struck against a jagged edge of the idol and he was knocked unconscious.

Laredo sprang upon him as a tiger upon his prey and raised a glittering knife high above his head to strike. Before it could descend, how-

ever, a strong hand from behind caught his wrist in a vise-like grip, and the knife was twisted from his hand.

"You are a most pleasant and interesting gentleman, and moreover an excellent murderer, Mr. President," Grant remarked as he pushed the President into a corner, covered him with his revolver, and placed his foot on the knife—all at the same time. "To witness what has just occurred, one would think that you are so kind-hearted as to wish to save your hangman unpleasant duties. Will you kindly be seated on that stone—it's the best I can offer you right now—and Mr. Hamilton will kindly entertain us with an account of all that has happened since he last saw me."

Laredo did as commanded, and Hamilton, who had recovered from the stunning blow received on the idol, also sat down by the side of Grant on the fallen image and told all that he had seen and heard in the temple. But before doing this he eyed the President from head to foot, and after expending some profanity, told him that he was of a mind to jump on him and give him a good American whipping.

"Oh, let him alone and tell your story," said Grant; "don't strike a fallen enemy, anyway."

"Put up your gun and let us have a round," said Hamilton; "I'll fight him all night before I'll have him going about telling that he got the best of an American."

Grant had to tell him again to tell his story before he would do so. He finally told his chief all about the affair. Grant exhibited no signs

of emotion during the recital. When Hamilton concluded he shook his head.

"Your Excellency is to be complimented upon your shrewdness in committing, or attempting to commit, a murder, but I can call your Excellency's attention to one little circumstance you omitted in this latter attempt, and which you will find beficial if you continue in that rôle. Always look around to see if any one is looking when you have decided to murder any one. But, as I have probably before remarked, you are an excellent gentleman, your Excellency, and make quite a good President; but I know another who can play his part quite as well.

"We all have our little ambitions, your Excellency. I have mine—it is to be a successful business man. I will still be kinder—I will tell you yours. Your ambition is to be made dictator of Maraquapez through the assistance of your pagan friends, who have been kind eough to believe everything you have told them through the mouth of this idol. The man who is an excellent President like yourself is named McCain, and as he is a particular friend of mine, I am sure he will permit me to thank you in his name if you will grant him the pleasure of being President in your stead for a few days. Meanwhile you may come and reside with us—we will reserve the basement for your especial accommodation. Only for a few days, your Excellency—only for a few days."

CHAPTER VIII.

"It has been some time since I last saw you," McCain remarked, as he rode away with Miriam, that afternoon.

"Yes," she replied, "and I think you should make up for the neglect by going with me to the lake."

"But it is getting late," said McCain, glancing at the departing sun; "won't your sisters be angry?"

"We need not be gone long. My sisters will be angry anyway, when they learn that I have disobeyed them and gone to the mines."

"Your plea is that since you have broken one commandment, you might as well break them all, is it? Well, since you wish it, and are not afraid of the consequence, I will go with you. You yourself know that it will be a great pleasure to me, but I would deny myself that pleasure rather than assist you to trouble."

"Oh, I will not get into trouble, or at least more than my ride is worth; and if I do, I cannot blame you, you know, since I proposed the ride. I don't see why papa and the girls oppose my taking horseback rides, when they know that I love nothing better."

"It is not your riding they oppose, but the

propriety of your being alone, or alone with a young man."

"They should not object to that, since no one wants to hurt me, and I do not ride alone with any young men but yourself and Mr. Grant, and you are good friends of the family, are you not?"

McCain agreed that they were wrong—he could not say any more—and very abruptly changed the subject. He only wished that he had that much faith in the world and the races of people that inhabited it. He wished that he had even the faith and confidence in the world that he had when a boy—provided that world would make itself worthy of that much faith and confidence.

In about half an hour the two drew rein on the grassy beach of the little lake, and stood in silence a moment watching the moonlight on the still water and the alligators floating upon its surface. In the forest at their back, they could hear a drove of monkeys chattering in anger at being disturbed, and a long-necked crane quawked on the opposite shore.

"This scene reminds me of a similar one I witnessed on the Congo, when I once was foolish enough to go into the wilds of Africa on a hunting expedition with a party of English gentlemen," remarked McCain, "but I saw the same scene much too often. It was a great deal more suggestive of danger than this, because, besides alligators, we had rhinoceros in the river, and we could hear the roaring of the lion and tiger in the jungles, and the bellowing of elephants and screaming of wild cats."

"Oh, how interesting! I did not know that

you had hunted in Africa. Begin at the first and tell me all about it."

"Well, there is not much to relate. I met the party who were going, in London. They invited me to join them, and being sort of a reckless fellow, I accepted. Had I known the outcome of the affair then, I would have certainly gone elsewhere, but not knowing, and anticipating a great time, I went along. I was not badly injured, but I did not enjoy the hunting much, and when we got back to London there was not a single one of us but could show a scar. I got mine from a fierce old jungle tiger. The beast paid us a visit while we were sitting around the camp-fire eating supper, and as she was not in the best of humors, having been wounded by one of the party in the hunt that day, she made things lively while it lasted. She scarred two of the men up pretty badly, and gave me a rake upon the arm before she was killed. As luck would have it, my pistol was lying near, and I managed to shoot her before she damaged me up badly. But this scene recalls our unpleasant journey down the river on our return trip. I lay groaning all night with a fever just such nights as these."

"How dreadful! Did any of the party die of the fever, or get killed?"

"No; we managed to escape death, and I have had a great deal of faith in destiny ever since. But just look! A storm is coming—we must race for home."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Miriam, as if a storm was quite a usual occurrence and nothing to ever be frightened at; "and I wanted to hear more of

your adventures. But we must hurry home. Papa will be very uneasy."

"Yes, and we will have to go at full speed," said McCain as they turned their horses' heads homeward. "When the cloud passes between us and the moon, it will be pitchy dark."

But ride as they might, the cloud beat them, and hid the moon. Then, as McCain had said, it became very dark, and, as he had feared, they soon wandered from the road and lost themselves. He did not inform Miriam of this fact at first, but she soon guessed it.

"Haven't we left the road, Mr. McCain?" she asked, from behind.

"Do not be frightened, Miss Miriam, but I fear we have. But this country is very thickly inhabited around here, I think, and we will soon stumble across some habitation."

Miriam said nothing. She was a little frightened at the approaching storm, but she had implicit confidence in her escort, and could steel herself so as not to become very excited in the time of danger.

McCain feared only for her. She had grown to be the center of his thoughts of late, and he loved her with that sort of an affection that never dies—an affection often spoken of in novels, but rarely seen in real life, and when seen, often referred to as the ravings of a man partly insane. He really felt that he would not hesitate, if the moment were to come when he could save her life by giving his own, but would instantly make that sacrifice as proof of his devotion. What mortal could do more?

"Let me tie my hitch rein to your horse so that we will not become separated," he said, drawing rein and waiting for her to ride up to his side. As she came up a flash of lightning revealed her features a moment, and he saw there the face of the woman—calm, beautiful and radiant as an angel. A great hope of having this treasure all for his own surged through his breast and made him forget for the moment his present situation.

Meanwhile the storm was fast approaching. The thunder came in sharp, prolonged peals and rolled about in the clouded heavens, while the lightning flashed and flickered in the western thunder clouds. The forerunner of the storm—the sudden cool gust of wind—informed McCain of its nearness, and yet they had seen no sign of house or shelter from the danger of falling limbs. He racked his brain in an effort to think of something he could do for the girl he loved. He knew that she was aware of the fact that in the forest where they were there was much danger of falling dead trees and rotten branches, but he could not run from that danger, because he did not know in which direction to run.

Suddenly his horse stumbled and threw him to the ground, but happily feet foremost. He landed in a thick cluster of undergrowth, and was more frightened to notice that he did not stop here, but went on sinking until he was up to his neck in a hole in the ground. He had caught at the underbrush as he felt himself sinking, but his hand slipped and he sank a few inches farther down and felt his foot resting on a firm foundation.

Scrambling back out of the hole, McCain took a few steps in the direction of his horse and caught him by the reins again.

"What is the matter?" Miriam inquired. "I thought I heard you walking on the ground. It is so dark I can't see you."

"Nothing; only I fell off my horse and discovered a safe retreat from the storm."

"What is it?"

"It is a sort of cave, I believe—a natural storm-hole. Do you want to go in?"

"By all means!" exclaimed the girl, as a tree fell near her. "But our poor horses! They will both be killed!"

"Sorry for the horses," said McCain; "but I have more regard for my own person—and you—than all the horses in the world. You see the hole is not quite large enough to admit horses. Let me help you to dismount."

Miriam placed her little hands in his large ones and sprang lightly to the ground. McCain then cleared away the undergrowth growing at the mouth of the cave, and helped her into the hole. Sitting beneath, Miriam saw his stalwart figure by the flashes of lightning outlined above, but he stood motionless and did not seem to have any intention of going into the cave with her.

"Why, are you not coming?" she asked.

"I will be all right up here," he said. "I can see a tree before it falls in time to get away."

"Well, if you are not coming, too, I am going back out there with you," she said innocently; "you discovered this hole and have as much right

to it as I. Besides, I am afraid to stay in here by myself." And she started to clamber out.

"Oh, if you are afraid, I'll go," said McCain, and he sprang in beside her. "Let us go further back in the cave—we are not quite safe from the storm here."

Miriam complied, and taking her hand, he led her deep into the cave, where they could only hear a faint murmur to remind them that a fierce storm was raging without.

McCain stumbled over a rock, and after feeling a while, he discovered that it made a perfect seat for two, and called her attention to the fact. She sat down, and he sat down by her—still retaining the little hand.

"Miriam," he said softly—"Miriam, I love you. Forgive me—I can't hold it any longer. Since that day I first met you, when we stopped at your father's house out of the storm, I have loved you. It is the great event of my life, and on your lips hangs my fate.

"I have traveled in many countries, dearest, and seen many beautiful women, but I have seen none that will compare with you, because you are my ideal—the beginning and ending of all things with me. You may not understand what I wish you to understand. You have read in novels of men who would die for their beloved—make any sacrifice for them. You have probably never seen that exemplified in real life, and do not believe it. You have never seen people who could bear the treatment of a dog and yet love the hand that strikes them. You may not believe it, but my love is as strong as all that, and will outlast

all time. Weigh well your answer, because on your words hangs my fate. Sweetheart, I love you."

Miriam remained for a moment motionless before speaking. Only her hand trembled occasionally in the larger palm of the man.

"I thank you, Mr. McCain," said the girl at last, "for your regard for me. I sincerely appreciate it as an honor I am not worthy of. But my heart speaks for itself—I love another."

Poor fellow! Then his destiny was not to be happy in her love, but to wander about the face of the globe, living a life ever ill at ease. Never had he known anything but disappointment. His heart, mind and all were wrapped up in the girl, and the blow was greater than any he had ever expected to receive.

"I am very sorry," said Miriam after a silence of some moments. "I do not wish to trample on your affections, because I appreciate the regard of a noble gentleman like yourself. But the world is full of women, noble and better—much better than myself and who will make for you a much better wife. I am not just the girl you seem to think I am."

"You are the sweetest girl in the world," said McCain as he raised the hand to his lips and imprinted a kiss upon the little fingers. "It was your sweet ways more than anything that made me your slave."

"You are a talented young man with brilliant prospects. Continue your literary work and think of me only as a friend, because the time will come

when you will be glad that it has turned out so."

"When could that be?"

"This is only a flame. You will meet your true love out in the world some day and you will laugh that you thought you loved me."

"Never. Is it fair to ask who is it that you love? Is it Grant?"

"I know it is a hopeless love," sighed Miriam for answer. "But please for my sake do not hint that I love him. Will you promise?"

"I promise," sighed McCain. "He is a noble man, Miriam—much more worthy of you than I. He has a brighter future before him and since I do not get this treasure I hope it will fall to my friend—the honor of plucking the sweet flower. Follow the dictates of your own heart, little girl," he sighed, "and God bless you!" It was well that he could not see the tear of sympathy in her eye, nor she the suppressed grief of his strong heart that beat and surged like the wild ocean. "I ask you to think kindly of me when I am gone away, for I have loved you above all the world and my love will last forever. And when you are in trouble send for me. It will not be a task to strive for your sake—it will be a pleasure, such as you would not realize.

"Forgive me for all these rash words," he added. "I am a poor worthless sort of fellow, but one given by God the power to love, as no man ever has or will. I will go and see if the storm is over now."

"He is worthy of any woman's affections," thought Miriam as she heard his firm footsteps echoing down the tunnel.

Presently he returned and calling her name softly to find out where she was, said very quietly:

"I am sorry, but a great tree has fallen across the mouth of the tunnel and we must go in search of the other end, if there is another."

CHAPTER IX.

MIRIAM arose meekly and took the hand of her guide again. She was too brave to give utterance of fear and yet was almost afraid to speak fearing that her voice would betray her anxiety and thus unman her protector.

"Have you ever been in the tunnel before?" she finally asked very quietly.

"I have not," replied McCain, "but I am quite sure there is some other outlet. I have been in similar caves in this country and I always found there were two outlets." He was cautious not to mention that there might be exceptions to the rule. "My belief is that this tunnel was dug out by human hands. At any rate if there is no other outlet we can go back and dig the dirt away from under the tree and crawl out that way. We may be some time but we will finally succeed."

In his heart he murmured, "And if we die together it will be with your dear voice murmuring in my ear."

But Miriam knew that he was only expressing all this to lift her up from giving away in despair, and she bore herself like the brave woman she was, without hinting in the least but that his words had given her hope or that she was really afraid that they were penned up in the mountain, far out of range of the voice of any living soul.

Suddenly McCain, who was in the lead, stumbled against the solid wall and feeling all around was finally forced to admit to himself that they were at the end of the tunnel.

"Well," he said with a tinge of fear in his voice, "we are at the end of the tunnel. We must go back now and dig our way out at the other end."

"I am tired," said Miriam.

"We must go back," he exclaimed hurriedly, "then you may rest. But I must go to work and dig our way out. If you can't walk I must carry you."

"I can walk," she said quietly.

"Do not be alarmed," he advised her as he remembered that it was possible he had frightened her by his words. "It may be that we are in a tight fix, but you must be brave or I will have to give up in despair."

"I will be brave," she replied still in a trusting and hoping voice. Hardly had she spoken when McCain ran against another obstruction. It was a massive rock that had fallen behind them and proved itself to be a giant barrier against their ever returning to where they had entered the cave.

He turned and clasped Miriam in his arms.

"Darling," he said in a voice full of emotion, "the destinies are against us—we must die. Let it be with my arm around you as it is and your little head upon my shoulder. Then like the Mohammedan who has journeyed far over the deserts to reach his holy shrine, I can die happy Sweetheart, there is only one great happiness in life—the great oasis in the barren desert—love. True love, such as surges like a stormy sea in my

heart for you. It makes the whole world kin. It makes a scorching desert seem a flower garden—a Persian garden of sweet roses."

"Do you remember that poem I read to you once? You did not dream that I was speaking my heart to you then. It reads like this," he continued, to keep her from thinking of the fate that awaited them.

MY GUIDING LUMINARIES.

Beautiful dreamy eyes! scintillating orbs!
That guide me as the star that shone
Resplendent in the East, and silent bade
The wise men march to see the King
Of all Jerusalem; and most puissant Prince
Of all the world, only my brown stars,
Proclaim my Queen, Empress of my heart!
And ruler of my thought. She, whose form
More beautiful than fair Helen; and whose face,
Is sweeter than the rose, whose eyes,
Dark scintillating venuses, are my hope,
My distant stars—my destiny!

I gazed into them—only once;
But deep down in them I sadly read
My heart's history—short and brief—
But plain—loving but not loved
In return; affection wasted on the Queen
Of women—as chaff thrown to the wind,
Is borne away and never more returns.

Others I have thought I loved, but that
Was like a spark thrown out from
The furnace of my heart; you control
The consuming blaze of fiery love;
They were but slight pauses on my way
To reach the shrine of love. The Shrine
Is reached; you are my holy shrine.
That face, that form, those dark eyes;
But alas, I can only humbly kneel
A worshipper, and gaze entranced
Into the soul of thine own eyes
That never yet has left me and never will."

During the silence that fell upon the two, McCain felt he was not satisfied with his explorations at the end of the tunnel. It occurred to him that it was a very unusual thing for a long tunnel like that to end so abruptly.

"Let us go back and examine the end of the tunnel again," he said to the girl. "I may have been too frightened to make a good examination."

Miriam rose and went with him. She was as a toy in his hands. She had no suggestions to make and meekly obeyed him in everything.

This time McCain felt over the whole wall at the end and even raised his hands above him for the top wall. Then he made the agreeable discovery that the tunnel did not end here but extended straight up. The wall was too perpendicular to admit of their further progress, however, and McCain did not see that they had made anything by this discovery unless the tunnel had been dug by human hands and ended under some person's house.

"We may be directly under some one's house," he said to Miriam. "Get behind me and I will fire my revolver. If any one lives above us they will hear the report and come to find out the matter."

Allowing the revolver to rest lightly in his hands McCain turned in the direction they had come and after Miriam was safe fired down the cave. For a moment after there was no sound, save the crumbling of rocks where the bullet had struck and the multitudinous echoes, far and near. Then he fired again.

He was on the point of firing the fifth time when Miriam suddenly exclaimed:

"Look! There is a light!"

CHAPTER X.

"WELL, your Excellency," said Grant after a moment's pause, "do you agree to give us the pleasure of trying our friend in the Presidential chair?"

His Excellency, however, made no reply. He was thinking of some plan to thwart the schemes of the Americans, into whose hands he had so unexpectedly fallen.

"Because if you do not," continued Grant, "we shall be under the painful necessity of making him President by main American force and shrewdness—and I hope, Mr. President, you will pardon our conceit."

"Oh, certainly," said the President, thinking that if he granted his permission they would allow him to go free during the time, "I don't mind his trying the office a short while, provided of course that I am permitted to enjoy my freedom in the meantime."

"We can only grant you freedom, Mr. President, to go back and forth in an almost air-tight basement room in our house at the mines."

"Well, I have nothing further to say then except that you are committing the crime of high treason and that the punishment for such is death."

"Very well, we will risk it. Listen, wasn't that a shot!"

"It was," said the President hoping to frighten them; "my people are coming to rescue me."

"They have a poor way of going about it," remarked Hamilton. "That shot was fired under the temple."

"There must be a cellar," said Grant, "and some one has fallen down there and can't get out. As it is not necessary for any one to know that his Excellency is in our gentle hands, you may take him on to the house and lock him up, Frank, while I stay behind and help this poor man out of his scrape;—by the way, if his Excellency should make a break you may blow him to pieces and thus release the poor man from all his earthly cares and troubles, which I am sure are many. Oh, I forgot that you are lost. Take the direction just on a bee line from this window and you will strike the road. Be careful; the woods are full of people hunting for Miriam and McCain, who are lost—I haven't time for explanations—and no one but Collins, Mr. Hempstead and Tom must see you. The moon is shining and you can see the road now when you get to it."

"All right, chief," said Hamilton. "Get in front of me, you unholy looking god, and mind, if you raise so much as a corner of your ear I will shoot you as I used to shoot coyotes on the Texas plain;" and with this warning Hamilton put a hand upon the President's shoulder and bade him proceed out of the building.

Grant took the lantern and followed on behind until they reached the entrance corrider down-

stairs. Then he searched for the cellar door after holding the light for Hamilton to get safely out in the moonshine with his prisoner.

Grant passed on into the first room and stopping listened attentively for a third shot to give him the location of the room under which the imprisoned person lay. A third and fourth shot in quick succession gave him the desired information and he passed quickly into that room. By the lantern light he saw a hole where once a trap door had been and going up to this he threw the lantern rays into the hole below and halloed.

"Hello, is that you, Grant? Get us out of this hole, will you? Have you a rope?"

"Wait a moment and I will get my bridle reins," said Grant, not waiting for any explanation of the strange occurrence.

He soon returned with the reins—one end of which he dropped into the hole.

"Let Miriam come first," he said, "I can lift her."

McCain tied the rope around her waist and Grant lifted the light burden up with apparent ease. Then the reins were made fast above and McCain climbed up hand over hand.

"Where are we?" Miriam inquired with a deep-drawn sigh of relief and glanced around her at the bare crumbling walls.

"We are in the ruins of an old temple out in the mountains," replied Grant, "and if you don't mind telling me I would like to have you two explain what you are doing out in the bosom of a mountain at midnight on a stormy night."

"Easily explained," said McCain, "but first let

us start home and we will tell you on the way. Mr. Hempstead and the girls will be frightened."

"Well, I should like to know who has not been," exclaimed Grant, "and who wouldn't be. There is a full score of people searching the mountains for you now. Where are your horses?"

"I haven't the least idea. We left them somewhere, but I'll be hanged if I know where. It was the other end of the tunnel, but I couldn't find it again if I were to search fifty years."

"Miss Miriam can ride my horse and we will come back and look for the horses in the morning," said Grant.

Miriam was placed on Grant's horse and the two men led the way back to the road.

"How did you happen to be in the temple at this time of night with a lantern?" McCain asked.

"Well, it was this way," Grant explained. "Tom Hempstead rode over in the storm and asked if you were there. When I told him that you were not, he told me that you had not returned and he feared that you were lost in the storm. So I put on my rubber coat, woke up Collins and we went in search of you. I happened to be in the temple when you shot."

He thought it best not to let Miriam into the secret of the capture of the President and the intended Indian uprising. He did not wish to frighten her and he was afraid that if it got out among the men at the mines they might leave by the next steamer.

Then McCain and Miriam told their story in detail, with the exception of the love talk in the cave.

They had agreed that the latter was not for the public to feast upon.

"Hello there—who is that?" cried a voice as they approached the road.

"The lost 'babes in the wood,' Tom," Grant answered.

"The next time you precious infants go lose yourself in a storm don't expect me to search for you," said Tom as they came up. "I've got other business to look after—besides if you can't keep a big road on a night the moon is shining you ought to be lost and never found. Here I have been racing about all night and will probably have such a cold I can't go to the cock-fight to-morrow —and I've got money up on 'El Paso,' too."

"If you only knew the danger your little sister has been in you would not mind the trouble, Tom," said Miriam. "Would you or would you not?"

"Oh, well, now, I didn't make any kick till I found you, did I?" asked Tom, as if they had never been found he would not regret the trouble taken. "Here's your horses that I found tied out in the woods, at least a half-mile from any one's house. How did it happen? Wait a moment though until I blow up the rest of the party," and taking a horn from the pommel of his saddle Tom gave it a vicious toot.

Soon from all directions it was answered and the search party joined them. The search party included Mr. Hempstead, Collins, all of Mr. Hempstead's servants and a half dozen men from the mines.

The homeward journey was resumed and Mc-

Cain and Miriam told their story to a party of interested men.

Miriam rode between her father and McCain and she promised her father again and again to obey her sister's commands and not go riding at night. She begged him to forgive her for being so rebellious, and as she rode along the moonlit road Grant declared that it was a pretty picture of the little rebel tamed of her mutinous spirit. And as she rode with her hand in that of her father's and her head bowed in submission and surrender she looked the very picture that he had quoted.

McCain little cared what was going on now that she was safe. He almost wished that he could have seen her rescued and remained behind to die in the tunnel. What would life be to him now?

"I am going away to-morrow," he whispered. "Try to remember me as one who has a good heart in spite of his faults; and when you are in trouble tell Grant to send for me. Good-bye—maybe forever."

"Good-bye, good friend."

"Will you come and go over to the mines with us, Mr. Hempstead?" Grant was asking in the meantime. "I have some important business to attend to to-night and we will need your assistance —government affairs," he whispered, "and they concern we Americans even to the matter of life and death!"

Wondering, Mr. Hempstead promised to go over when he had seen Miriam safe; and he took her in to the sisters, who scolded and blessed the little Cinderella by turns. Then he rejoined the party at the gate and they all rode for Velasco at full

speed. McCain rode in the rear, thinking of the late occurrence and one of the miners dropped back with him.

"It's mighty easy to get lost in the mountains at night, ain't it, Mr. McCain?" he asked.

"Very easy," replied McCain.

"I didn't know that you knew the cave was there," he continued.

"I didn't."

"Well, weren't you glad when you found it?"

"Yes. We found it just in time. The storm came up just as we went in."

"That was a good excuse you made to the old un," said the miner with an insinuating smile.

McCain looked up quickly.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed in a hoarse voice. The miner's breath smelled suspiciously.

"Oh, nothin'. I only said that excuse you give the old man took all right."

McCain struck the workman in the mouth before he knew it.

"You miserable hound!" he cried, "if you ever make another insinuation like that I will kill you in your tracks! Ride on ahead, damn you, before I shoot you now."

"Oh, I beg pardon, Mr. McCain," said the miner, who had never been acquainted with nice ladies. "I beg pardon."

"Ride on," said McCain, "and never open your mouth again."

"What is the meaning of this?" Mr. Hempstead asked as the party dismounted and were met at the door by Hamilton.

"What are you up to?" inquired McCain.

Grant did not reply until he saw the miners that had participated in the search go into their cabins —which were the last ones in the row. Then he turned and said, "Lead on, Frank."

Hamilton led the way into the basement with the lantern and unlocking the door of a strong room, he threw the bull's-eye of his lantern on the figure of Laredo sitting in a corner.

"Gentlemen," said Grant after a moment's silence, "Señor Ferdinand Laredo, President of the Republic, is glad to have the pleasure of receiving you!"

CHAPTER XI.

For a moment Mr. Hempstead, Tom and McCain stared at the President in silence. Finally Mr. Hempstead broke the silence.

"What is the meaning of this, Grant?" he asked. "Do you know this is high treason?"

"You are right, Señor," said Laredo; "treason of the very rankest sort. But as you are not a party to it I will not harm you if you can manage to send a note to General Rioja, explaining the state of affairs and giving him my orders to move with the police against this house."

"Say, you 'close,'" requested Hamilton; "you haven't got any vote in this convention."

"In the way of an explanation, gentlemen, I will say this," said Grant. "I have wondered of late how government affairs would be attended to if we had another President in office and my curiosity getting the better of me, I have determined to try another. Hamilton, I am sorry to impose upon your good nature, but I am quite sure the gentlemen would be obliged if you relate your story again."

Hamilton related how he had become lost, his adventure in the temple, how he had saved Laredo's life and how Grant had appeared upon the scene just in time to save his own.

"Now, gentlemen," said Grant—still in a bantering tone, "the President is an excellent man,

but he is just like the rest of us, in fact like everything human—he has his ambitions. Unfortunately for us we stand in his way and have incurred his Excellency's great disregard. If the President were, say dictator of the state his power would be much greater—in fact so great that he could point his finger and the Americans would understand that they must go. We love this country too much to leave it, so we must furnish a President for a few days who can lay aside his ambitions for the good of the State. In short, a good, honest statesman that can lay aside all his hopes and serve the country much better by refusing this offer of dictatorship when it is made to him, at the public festivities the day after to-morrow. I will say beforehand, gentlemen, that a President's life is fraught with danger, and the danger of this acting President will be fifty times doubled. I will ask no man to undertake this perilous adventure, but I will merely call your attention to the fact that in stature and features McCain is the nearest the President's double. This is said with no intention either of insulting any one, because the President is really handsome."

"I will be the President," cried McCain. The poet was reckless and he thought too that here was a chance of serving the girl he loved.

"Think twice, old man," said Grant, "remember that it is a dangerous undertaking."

"I don't care, I am determined. It's the only chance I'll ever have of becoming the President of any country," he added smiling at the circle of faces about him that seemed dark and stern by the pale lantern light.

"Can't I play President a while?" asked Tom, who began to fear it was a made-up affair between the two to slight him.

"Compare your broad shoulders with those of his Excellency—there is a difference of one-half."

"Give me the job," said Hamilton. "I'll make the best President this god-forsaken country ever had."

"Yes, but it will be difficult to explain to the people how the President's hair managed to turn from dark to sandy in one night, or how he managed to become so square-shouldered in one night. No, after McCain I am the nearest like the President, and I will undertake it if McCain don't wish to go. If you have decided after I have warned you, McCain, you will have to make some changes. You will have to exchange clothes with his former Excellency and don a false moustache that I have upstairs which will have to be trimmed some, and you will have to change your Spanish accent a great deal."

"I beg your pardon, Señors," said a voice from the doorway, "but madame, the wife of the President, has sent me here in search of his Excellency. She informed me that he had told her he was coming here and as the storm has caused her to be anxious for his welfare she has sent me to tell him to return. Have any of you—ah, your Excellency, you have heard my mission."

"How did you happen to know that we were down here?" asked Collins.

"Pardon me, señors," said the general—for the new arrival was Rioja, the commander-in-chief of the army. "I should have explained that on my

first entering. As I stepped upon the veranda I saw a light shining upon the wall opposite the head of the stairs. I supposed you were downstairs conferring with his Excellency upon some matter of business, so I ventured upon the liberty of coming down."

"You did quite right," said McCain. "Mr. Hamilton will usher you up to the office and entertain you until the President has finished his business consultation. We will not detain his Excellency long."

"It's a lie, Rioja—they have me a prisoner," exclaimed Laredo. "Rescue me!"

With the first words of the President, Rioja, who supposed him to be in some danger, drew his sword, while Laredo leaped toward the door. But Hamilton jerked the President back violently against the wall, while the faithful old general looked down the blue barrel of Grant's Smith and Wesson revolver.

"His Excellency has changed his mind, General," said Grant. "He has decided to remain a few days with us and he would be obliged to have you remain also. Now, Hamilton, your ambitious desires may be partially granted. You have asked to be President of Maraquapez, but commander-in-chief of the army is the highest office we can tender you right now. It may be that in the near future we will have something better."

"Thank you," said Hamilton. "That beats nothing as good as a flush will take a pair. I am a patient man and I can wait to be President."

"I wish the Secretary of the Treasury would

break in now," remarked Tom. "I am getting left clear out of this deal of portfolios."

"I have a moustache upstairs that will do you, too, Hamilton," Grant continued.

"Say, you must be a sort of Nick Carter," broke in Tom.

"They were used by McCain and me when we got mixed up in that revolution in Venezuela last year and saved our lives. If we had not procured them we would never have escaped the mob that rebelled against the foreigners," said Grant. "Now, gentlemen, part of us will guard the President and General, while the rest help to make the change. Collins, you had better go upstairs and guard us against further interruption."

The captives were ordered to disrobe, which they did rather sullenly. While the exchange of clothing was being effected Tom Hempstead entertained the General with an account of the President's shrewd schemes. The honest old General was shocked.

"If this is true, Señors," he said, "you may let me out and I will go about my business without revealing your plans."

"General," said Grant, "I would bet ten to one that if you were released you would do as you say, but that one is where you lose. If I could bet ten to nothing I would give you your liberty. You see you know a lot to tell if you wanted to tell it and this is a game it won't pay us to lose. We will set you free just the moment we are safe, and we will see that you are reinstated in office. Now, boys," Grant continued to the disguised men, "I believe your disguises are perfect. You are both

reckless and hot-headed, but let me advise you to be cool and drop sentiment now. Remember that the lives of every American in this State are resting in your hands and their safety depends entirely on your being cool and collected.

"You understand why I am asking you to undertake this move. It is to thwart Laredo and by refusing the dictatorship for him save ourselves a great danger. With Laredo for dictator of Maraquapez our lives are not worth a straw."

"When the President's household supposes you to be retired to-night, slip out and take this letter to your yacht, McCain, and entrust it to the man in charge of your vessel. Order him to sail on the morrow for New Orleans with all possible speed and deliver the letter to the agent of the company stationed at that port. The letter requests the agent to rush us up two hundred workmen at once, and when this is done the captain of the yacht must hurry back with them, first telegraphing when he can get here. Tell your officer that 300 rifles will be packed in the machinery boxes and 7,500 cartridges will be in the soap boxes. He must not let any of the men know the real contents of these boxes. It is my belief that whether the President accepts the dictatorship or not, or who is President, the Indians intend to rebel and I want to be prepared for them."

"If that is your belief, why do you hold us prisoners?" inquired Laredo.

"For this reason: you will accept the dictatorship, get a large force to swear to an alibi for you and we could tell the Spanish settlement and the army what we pleased about your perfidy. Then, on the

night the Indians proposed to attack us, you would be there with your army to aid them. Oh no, we know a good thing when we have our hands on it, and we intend to keep an eye on you until this little fun is over. That is all, boys. Be cool, now. By George! you are perfect counterparts of the men you are supposed to be."

So Collins seemed to think, for when he saw them by the hall lamp upstairs coming out way ahead of the others, he thought the prisoners were escaping and threw up his gun to recapture them.

"As general of the army I arrest you on the charge of high treason," said Hamilton, laughing and passing on, while Collins put his pistol back in its sheath, at the same time looking much like a man when "the drinks are all on him."

CHAPTER XII.

"Oh, here you are at last, my President!" cried Madame Laredo, running forward to meet McCain and Hamilton as they came up the walk about three o'clock that morning. With all her Spanish blooded vivacity she kissed the supposed President, while Hamilton abruptly turned his back and stuffed a red bandanna handkerchief in his mouth.

"I have been sitting up and waiting for you so long," said Madame Laredo. "Why have you staid away so long and why are you so cold and distant toward me?"

McCain caught the hint of being "cold," so he warmed up to his task, after cordially inviting the brave old General to be seated, and flung as much "hot air" at her as if he were courting her.

"Isn't he charming, General?" the madame asked. "He hasn't pretended to be so fond of me since we were married."

"Though he may be too busy now to often talk of love to you, madame, his Excellency is as fond of you as ever," replied the stern old General, at the same time warning the President to freeze a little, by a solid kick in the dark, which unfortunately landed on one of McCain's corns.

"Oh, damn——"

"Why, Ferdinand!"

"Well, I can't help it when I think of those

Americans. Haven't they made splendid progress at the mines, though, General?"

McCain barely saved himself, but in his sufferings he could not forbear speaking in English.

"Why, Ferdinand, you can speak English well. He hasn't taken many lessons, either, General."

"I have often noticed that his Excellency is a brilliant scholar, Madame," said Hamilton, who had been laughing in the dark and who had sobered up just in time. "But I am a better soldier than scholar, your Excellency. Will you translate your question into our native tongue? I did not get it all."

"I didn't think you understood a word of English, General," said Madame Laredo.

"Now I put my foot in it," said Hamilton to himself. Then he added aloud: "Oh, yes, I have lately picked up a few little phrases. If I didn't learn anything from the variety I used to hear in the mines I ought to be hung," he added to himself again.

Of course, after the President had repeated his question in Spanish, the General understood perfectly. He was well aware of the fact that the Americans were making much progress at the mines, but he thought that the State had done wrong in allowing them to open up the business in their country. The President was of the same opinion also, and declared that he had done all in his power to prevent their settling there, but all his work had been in vain, just because the government officers would not stand by him. Madame Laredo begged them, however, not to be so prejudiced against the Americans. They were a peace-

fully disposed people, attended strictly to their own business, and as they were good business men, the country was much better off by having them there. But neither the President or General agreed to this and they thought that instead of benefitting the country the Americans did just the opposite.

"And now, little wife, you will arrange the east room for the General and me," said the President, not knowing but that the parlor or kitchen was on the east side of the house.

"I guessed that the General would consent to stay with you, and, knowing what great friends you were, I had two beds placed in the east room for you."

"The General will probably leave for the frontier again in a few days, and as we see so little of each other of late, he has consented to stay with me while in San Samanca."

"I am sure you are glad to have the General with you," said Madame Laredo. "You were ever like brothers. A general's life is not a rose bed, is it, General? But you should not complain. You are rewarded far above your fellowmen."

"Yes, Madame, we are rewarded much. I am myself more than repaid by your kind friendliness, and when the flower of our beautiful ladies thus rewards me I can care but little for the privations and dangers I undergo."

"Ah, General, you are still as gallant as ever," said Madame Laredo, bowing and holding her lips up for the President to kiss her good night. "Good night, Ferdinand. Good night, General."

"I guess this is the east room where this light

is shining," said McCain, as they walked down the hall.

"I guess not," replied Hamilton, as he jerked his head in and jerked it out as quick, "unless our bedroom is the same as that of madame's sister."

"Well, this must be it," said McCain, stopping before another room where a light was shining.

"I don't care whether it is or not, I am going in," and Hamilton walked on in and took a seat on the side of the bed. "You are a fine host not to know your own bedroom."

"Fine host or poor one," said McCain, "if you ever kick me on my corn again you leave this house, and if you give me any back talk about it I will fire you from your job."

Hamilton lay back on the bed convulsed with laughter.

"When I think of how you jumped and cussed," he said, "I don't regret being only general because of the fun I am getting out of it. But," he continued, sobering up, "when I see you and your wife sitting there happy in each other's love I think that Grant treated me wrong."

"If this kind of a scene keeps up I think my wife will cause me to lose my job."

"What do you care—what do you care? You should not care as long as you have her. Your first duty lies toward your loved ones at home."

Madame Laredo was the kind of woman that it is hard for time to break. She was at least thirty-five years of age and still retained fair, unbroken features. Her great sorrow in life was that she had never been the mother of children. She had been deceived by her husband all along, and the

man she thought was the very embodiment of all that was good and noble, was, on the contrary, the very opposite—a scheming politician—a traitor to the country that had honored him.

McCain threw open the window of the bedroom and gazed out. The window opened out on the veranda and on the street was about fifty yards away.

"Blow out the lamp, Frank," he said, "and let's cut it through the yard to the street. We've got to get a move on us if we make it to the yacht and back before good light."

Hamilton did as he was commanded, and, slipping out of the window the two dropped from the veranda to the ground and walked hurriedly across the lawn to the street and then to the wharf, where they found a skiff and rowed to the yacht, which was lying in the still waters. They had removed their moustachios, but even then the watch on board did not know McCain in his Spanish dress.

"Who goes there?" he cried.

"Go wake McCarthy and tell him to come down here, Will," commanded McCain.

McCarthy presently appeared, looking very sleepy, and descended the ladder thrown down. McCain introduced him to Hamilton as the ship's captain, and then gave him the letter with the instructions. He took McCarthy into his confidence to insure the captain's promptness, but commanded him under no circumstances to let it escape his mouth.

The next morning Madame Laredo appeared at breakfast arrayed in a loose fitting gown, in which she looked fresh and beautiful. She greeted the

impostors with smiles and a kiss for the President. McCain was sorry that it was a case of necessity for him to deceive her so, but he remembered what Grant had told him,—that it would be necessary to drop all sentiment,—so he tried to dismiss the subject from his mind.

"I declare, Señors," she said, "you are both looking fresh and quite young. May I ask where this fountain of youth is that I may restore my youth also?"

McCain seated himself next her, after asking Hamilton to take the chair on the opposite side of the table, and began the meal.

"You do not need the assistance of a fountain of youth to hold your own, my dear—at least in my old eyes."

"His Excellency is quite right," added General Rioja. "People have often commented upon your youthful appearance in my presence—er, you are not very old, are you, Madame?"

"Ask Ferdinand," said madame. "He knows my age even better than I?"

"Holy Virgin!" McCain exclaimed, but happily in Spanish. "I have forgotten it as 'slick as a whistle.'"

"'Slick as a whistle,'" repeated Madame Laredo. "What does that mean, Ferdinand?"

"Oh, that is just a phrase I picked up from those Americans. It don't mean much of anything."

"And so you have forgotten my age? Isn't he devoted, General, to forget his wife's age? Which is it, now, thirty-five or thirty-six?"

"Whatever it is, Madame," said Hamilton, taking the hint after McCain had nearly kicked him

to pieces under the table, "you certainly deceive your looks. If this were the first time I had seen you I would pronounce you not over twenty-five."

"Thank you, General, for the compliment, but don't forget that Spanish gentlemen are prone to flatter."

"In my country, Madame," and the General glanced significantly at the President, "in my country the ladies are so very beautiful one cannot well flatter."

"Your patriotism carries you too far, Manuel," said the President, "because in mine and your country I have seen some very ugly women."

"And I suppose I am one?" asked Madame Laredo, shyly.

"You, Madame, are not only the foremost lady of the land because you are the 'Mistress of the White House'——"

"What is that?"

"That is another expression I caught from the Americans. It is what they call their President's wife."

"Oh, I see. You are learning the American ways very fast, in spite of your dislike for them."

"Well, as I was saying, not only are you the foremost lady of the land, by being the President's wife, but your beauty gives you that place also."

"You so love to flatter me," and the President's wife actually arose and kissed him at the table, while Hamilton turned his head and stuffed two biscuits in his mouth.

"Ferdinand," she said, as they arose from the table, "Sister Isabel wishes me to go home with

her to see dear old father and stay a couple of weeks. Could you spare me that long?"

"Yes, gladly—that is, if it were some one else. But as it is you it will be hard to do without you that long. But you may go and see the old man. You haven't seen him for so long."

"Why it was just last week that he was here to see me."

"That's right—I had almost forgotten that."

"Besides, I will be back for the ball."

"Eh? What ball? Oh, that's right, I had almost forgotten the ball, too. Well, good-bye, dear. Have a good time and come back soon."

And thus cautioning her, the President strolled across the grounds to the capitol with the General.

"Isn't that a streak of luck," he cried when out of hearing. "I hope she will stay away now until my official career here is ended."

"You are a lucky fellow. Now there is a beautiful Spanish woman given you as wife and you wanting her to leave, while I can't get one as a gift, purchase or conquest."

"I can't get the one I want," and McCain sighed as he thought how strikingly true his words were. "Say, what ball is that?"

"I don't know. I guess we will find out in time to grace it with our honored presence. That must be your office boy," he added, referring to a young mestizo at the office door, who bowed low as they entered, and, closing the door behind them, went on to some other part of the building.

"Well," said McCain, as he sat down at the desk and began looking over the loose papers, "I've got to run this government in some sort of a way

and having no experience I am slightly at a loss how to do the thing."

"Oh, any old way will pass. Just look at me. I've got to command an army when I never was so much as a private."

"Señors Paoquaz, Roderigo and San Miguel to see your Excellency," announced the mestizo.

"Ah," said McCain, aside to Hamilton, "my Indian friends who wish me to chase the Americans out of the country. Show them in," he added aloud to the mestizo.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Good morning, Señors," said McCain from his desk as the three men entered.

The Indians bowed and seated themselves in a circle about the supposed President. They were, in fact, three wealthy, influential men, with good primary education and members of the Maraquapez State Assembly. Each represented a province, where, of course, the Indians were the most populous and which, of course, was the least civilized part of the country. But so firmly had the spirit of their religion been planted in their bosoms in childhood no education or civilization could uproot it. They had grown more fanatic if anything and were the secret leaders of their sect.

"Well, Señors," said McCain, putting a paper weight on the last document he had been reading, and leaning back in true business style, "what can I do for you to-day?"

"Your Excellency," said Paoquaz, "may remember something of the debates that ensued in the Assembly when the offer for the purchase of land by the Velasco Mining Co. was before the Secretary of Agriculture and Mines."

"I remember very well," said McCain, briefly, as if he had been the presiding officer of the Senate and right there, instead of a thousand miles away. "But I fail to see where that can be connected with any business that you may have with me."

"We will get to that point directly, your Excellency. You will remember also that among those who strongly opposed this measure was myself and my two friends here. You will remember also that you yourself were not in favor of the measure.

"We will give you our reasons for opposing the sale. We represent in the Senate three of the most populous provinces in the State, and the population of those provinces consists mostly of people of our own race. Some of our people have to hire to these Americans because they cannot get employment elsewhere. These Americans treat our people as if they were slaves. They beat them, starve them and let them die of fever without doing anything to help them.

"Well, the Velasco Mining Co. effected their purchase simply because the white people who were not subjected to this treatment did not care. Fifty of our people who could get no other employment were forced to hire to the Americans. What has been the result? They have been beaten, starved——"

"Hold!" cried Hamilton, with a frown on his brow, but McCain secretly pinched him to remind him where he was. "I am opposed to this incursion of the foreigners quite as much as yourselves, Señors," he said, appeasing his angry outbreak, "but I am for justice all the time. His Excellency will bear me out in the statement that when we went through the mines on a tour of inspection we found that all the laborers were treated alike and none of them badly treated."

"The General is quite right, Señors," said Mc-

Cain. "We found no such state of affairs as you mention."

"Then we have been imposed upon," said San Miguel. "But suppose they have not been badly treated in this case, your Excellency, there are other cases. Even if they had never been badly treated, the fact that the Americans are in our country raising our products and digging our wealth to send away is enough to make the hearts of the true patriots burn in anger. We have stood their persecutions too long, Mr. President, much too long."

"Much too long," repeated Roderigo, shaking his head. "Do you know, your Excellency, our people have been greatly satisfied with you. They send by me hearty words of greeting. They say that you have served Maraquapez well and they think that you deserve more reward. They think our country could be better governed if you were, for instance, dictator."

"They think that you would be better able to act were you not so restrained by the law governing the President's power," said San Miguel. "They think that if you were dictator these Americans would be glad to get away with their lives. Our people are strong in numbers, Mr. President. In fact, they compose the majority of the population and are in all parts of the country following all trades and professions. Some are in the Senate and one is in the Cabinet. Some are in the army, as you know, General, and some are in the fields and mines. But they all love their President and at a signal will be ready to defend him with their lives."

"They will all be at the parade to-morrow," said Paoquaz, "and after the parade they will march in a body before the reviewing stand and Señor Roderigo will make an address thanking you for your past services, and offering you a reward. We are not at liberty to state what that reward will be until Señor Roderigo mentions it in his speech."

"We have this much to say beforehand, your Excellency," Roderigo broke in, "if you will get up some excuse to drive the American adventurers out of the State and the white people rise in rebellion against you, we will be prepared to stand by you, every man of us, and we are the majority."

McCain bent his head a moment as if in thought.

"This is a flattering proposal, Señors," he said, "but it will be also a bold step. You must give me time to think it over. Come to this room at ten day after to-morrow and I will give you your answer."

The Indians bowed and filed out of the room.

"Well," said McCain, as the door closed on them, "I have a flattering proposal to consider, as you have just heard, and as you have your army to arrange for the parade to-morrow, I propose you do that while I take a nap."

"Thank the Lord I've met most of my officers in the cafés and on the plaza, so I know their names and rank. I'll just give them a touch of the 'big head' by acting upon their suggestion regarding the line up and so forth."

"Well, don't forget your business and go dragging after the Señorita Ínez. The report is already spread that you and I have gone to New Orleans on

my yacht, and if you confide in every one, the call for government officers will be greater than we can supply."

"Your job is President of the republic, while mine is general of the army. You will please to look after your business and let mine alone."

"Don't get huffy. I might have you fired," McCain shouted after him. "Now, if none of those Cabinet officers come bothering around I can sleep a while."

McCain drew a portrait from his pocket and gazed at it steadily a moment. It was a side view of Miriam in a white summer gown. "Dear little girl," he said, sadly, "there is nothing I would not do for your sake." Then, with a last lingering look at the photograph and a long drawn sigh, he placed it in his pocket again, and, taking up a pen began to write. He dashed off two or three pages of manuscript, and, putting the paper weight upon what he had written lay down upon the lounge and went to sleep.

Hamilton soon returned, and, finding him asleep, did not disturb him, but sat down in the desk chair and picked up the pages McCain had written. He read it through and chuckled softly to himself. They read:

In the midnight shade repining,
When the world is wrapped in sleep;
And the moonlight dim is shining
O'er the calm and peaceful deep,
And the South wind fitfully
Sighs its sweetest melody.

And the moon in dimness shining,
O'er the dark and shadowy trees,
Seemed a casket golden reclining
In the deep blue ethereal seas,
Or some spirit watch of light
Keeping guard o'er ancient night.

Then I wandered by the river,
In the quiet and silent night,
Saw the busy waters quiver
And rush on in mad delight—
Saw, in youthful immensity
The river rushing to the sea.

And I compared my own dreaming,
Of a life, unto this stream,
And how all things seeming
Are not what they always seem;
And how when life's fever is past,
The boundless sea is reached at last.

Ah, fairest maiden! best beloved!
Thou whose radiant features bless,
And whose perfect life is wedded
Unto perfect loveliness:
From far o'er moorland and lea
Thy presence comes again to me.

And I stand as one entranced
Holding thy white hand
While the mellow moonlight danced
O'er the river and the land:
And I see in thy brown eyes
All that's fair in paradise.

L. of C.

But alas! the old illusions
Of a sad, tormented brain
And the oft and oft confusions
Of a passion that's insane;
And hopes that in our bosoms quiver
Rush on like the maddened river.

"Poor fellow—poor fellow!" sighed Hamilton as he tiptoed out of the room. "What would his mother have thought had she known he was writing poetry?"

CHAPTER XIV.

"HELLO, Tom," said McCain, as Tom Hempstead came upon the porch the evening after the interview with the Indians. "How is everything at the mines?"

"Nothing stirring, your Excellency," Tom drawled. "There is nothing doing to show that your country is on the eve of a great insurrection. Beg pardon. Are we quite out of earshot?"

"We are."

"Madame Laredo—I hope she is quite well?"

"Quite. My wife is visiting the old man—pa, you know?"

"Oh, I see. Your suggestion, I suppose?"

"No, not his suggestion," said Hamilton, "but since I have been a guest in this mansion I have observed that his Excellency is not as good to his wife as one may suppose him to be."

"Say, I guess we will have the honor of your distinguished presence at the ball given by Señor Aracajo next Monday night?"

"That reminds me," said Hamilton. "I found an invitation on my table when I went to my lodging. I am going."

"Well, I can't say that I am going until I find whether I have been invited or not."

"Ask your servants to bring you the invitation if it has come."

"I may have seen it once before."

"That's all right. Tell your butler to bring you the invite; that you want to see it again."

"But it may not have come?"

"Say, I wouldn't be President for anything. Just look at the difficulties he runs up against," remarked Tom.

"Then just think of the noble chance he has of serving his country. I tell you what you can do, Mac. Tell the servant to bring you the invitation, and if he says you haven't any, just remark that it is strange that it has not come."

McCain rang and gave the order. The servant bowed and brought the invitation. McCain merely glanced at it and gave it back.

"It's bona fide," he remarked, after the servant had closed the hall door behind him. "I guess I will be on hand."

The next day the President of the republic took his seat in the reviewing stand at half past nine exactly. Great crowds had gathered in the plaza and on the streets and when they saw the familiar figure of the President rise above their heads they sent up a mighty cheer that was echoed and re-echoed. The white people did not like their President, but it was a part of their nature to cheer as if he were their ideal. After the President bowed twice the cheering was repeated and prolonged. McCain saw there was no other way to quiet them but to make a short speech, so very reluctantly he arose.

"My friends and countrymen," he said, raising one hand to command silence, "this is an auspicious day. We are here to gaze again upon our pro-

tectors—our guardians—the army. We are here to see once again our soldier boys returned but lately from the frontier, where they have been exposed to the enemy, the fever, the fatigue of forced marches and the scorching sun. Let us do them honor, for they have served their country well and borne themselves like the heroes of that country where 'brave men never die.' It demonstrates to the world the power and patriotism of our country. Welcome, people of San Samanca and Maraquapez! and all honor to the heroes who have returned!"

As the fake President concluded his speech a deafening shout went up from the crowd below. Hats, handkerchiefs and walking sticks were waved in the air and cries of "Long live the President!" was heard on every side.

McCain, sitting between De Callabaro and the Secretary of Home Affairs, heard a familiar voice shouting lustily in among the carriages lined along the street in front of the reviewing stand, and, glancing in that direction, he saw the entire party of his American friends. Tom Hempstead, seated on a horse, was doing the excessive yelling, while Grant and Miriam, on the front of the Hempstead carriage, were waving their handkerchiefs and smiling.

"That was a fine speech, your Excellency," remarked De Callabaro.

"Thanks," murmured McCain, as his eyes rested on the trim figure and smiling face of the girl he loved. Her smile was sweet even when given to Grant, he thought. What would it be like if given to him, and with these reflections in his mind he did

not notice the Indians drawing away and walking up the street one by one. At a signal from San Miguel they had gone to the mustering place to fall in and march in the rear of the army to the reviewing stand.

Suddenly a loud shout announced the approach of the army, and Hamilton, riding with his staff, turned the nearest corner. This shout had come in time to save Grant from answering an embarrassing question. Miriam had just asked him if he knew why the President glanced so intently at her.

The people gave a loud, prolonged cheer as the supposed General Rioja passed with his staff and cheered so continually as the army passed as to almost completely drown the music of the bands.

McCain leaned far over the railing of the reviewing stand with his eyes fixed on Hamilton to see if he made any sign that would reveal his identity. If he did so his body would be trampled to pieces by the mob before any explanations would be listened to. An army of soldiers was at his back and a surging multitude of people all around him.

But Hamilton acted his part well. He assumed the stern, stolid appearance of the old general—looking straight in front and only turning his head once to salute the President. McCain heaved a sigh of relief as he passed by unmolested and turned his eyes to the army of private soldiers.

After the army the white people were surprised to see the great force of Indians marching in the rear with Paoquaz, Roderigo and San Miguel riding ahead. For a moment the people were all so silent McCain heard the ticking of his watch.

Just as the three leaders rode opposite the reviewing stand San Miguel wheeled his horse and cried, "Halt!" in loud, stentorian tones, while Roderigo rode forward a step and bowed low in his saddle to the President. The long line of Indians in the rear all halted and stood silent and immovable.

Then Roderigo began his speech, telling how faithful the President had been to his country in the time of need. He reminded him how faithfully he had discharged his duty and thanked him in the name of his people.

"We need some fearless man to lead us on toward the bright goal shining near of progress in education, commerce and science. This man must be faithful in the discharge of his duty to his country and his people," continued Roderigo, "and he must not be hampered with extremely limited power. He must have more freedom to act than the President of the Republic or the great task will never be accomplished.

"The hour has come, but where is the man? My people have pondered long over the question and they have concluded unanimously that there is only one man in Maraquapez they can trust with all this power and yet pledge their lives in maintaining him in power. Let all cry, 'Long live Laredo, Dictator of all Maraquapez!"

All down the long line of Indians the cry was repeated time and again, then died away and all was silent as the grave. Every eye in the great crowd was on the President. Not a white native moved in his tracks or spoke a word. "Would the President accept?" they thought. If he did they

told themselves there would be bloodshed in Maraquapez! McCain arose slowly and for a moment stood facing Roderigo. Then he spoke in slow, measured tones, clear to all in sight.

"I thank your people for their flattering offer," he said, "and unmerited compliment. In the discharge of my duty, however, I deserve no thanks.

"It is not necessary to have a dictator in Maraquapez. We can attain prosperity without that change in government, so after serious reflection I feel it my duty to my people to decline the offer with thanks."

Then, from the ranks of the whites gathered near, arose a loud, prolonged cry of "Long live the President!"

CHAPTER XV.

One morning some time after the events described in the preceding chapters, Thomas Hempstead lay out in a shady grove in the rear of the house, and clanged unmercifully upon a guitar. Judging by appearances Tom was supremely happy. A cigarette was between his lips as usual, and his feet were propped high above his head. Only one thing was needed at the moment to make his life one happy dream, and that, of course, was a dog fight where he had up odds.

He could hear Mabel singing in the house and Miriam humming a popular ditty in the yard. Presently the latter joined him.

"I suppose you know that McCain has gone to New Orleans, sis," Tom remarked as calmly as if he were telling the truth.

"Papa has told me," she said. "When will he return?" she asked, plucking at a flower on her breast.

"He did not say. I do not think he ever intends to return," he replied, watching her out of a corner of the eye, but Miriam remained to all appearances indifferent.

"I am sorry," she said. "He was a very nice young man."

"That isn't all—he is handsome."

"Yes, he is very handsome."

"That isn't all yet—he is wealthy and much sought after by people that have marriageable daughters."

"You need not have added the latter—it is understood."

"Yes, but he is sought after not only for his wealth; he is a shining light in any society; has traveled a great deal and knows lots about the people and their customs the whole world over. Upon the whole he is considered an excellent match."

"What do you mean?" she asked, innocently.

"Simply this: you should have encouraged him more."

"Now, look here," she said, sitting down by him and pushing his hair back out of his eyes, "you are my big brother and strong, but you are not strong enough to govern my heart at all. I can't govern it myself and I am the owner."

"A very large heart it is, too, sis, and a very sweet owner," said Tom, kissing her, for he could be good and not mischievous to her at times. "Well, I was just thinking how pretty you two would look before the altar. He handsome, brave, rich and learned; you pretty, sweet, demure and trusting. Wouldn't it be a great sight?"

Miriam was looking away. She was thinking of the same scene with another—and he was handsome, brave and strong, too.

"Such marriages have been made before," she said, "where true love was lacking, and the result was broken hearts and homes. Where there is true love is only when a match is a good one—the rest is not important."

"Oh, well, you needn't throw that old song up—

I am not trying to make you marry any one," said Tom, "but I am sorry to see you pass McCain by. You know yourself he loves you."

"Yes, I know," she said, smiling as she thought of the night in the cave and then sighing as she thought how sad he was, "but I don't love him. Turning the subject a little, why don't you marry the Señorita Inez?"

Tom was about to say, "Because I don't love her," but he thought it best to say instead that "She doesn't love me."

"I don't ever intend to marry anyway," he added. "I don't want a wife to keep me everlastingly tied."

"Maybe I don't intend to marry either."

"Yes, but you will have to embark on the sea of matrimony. You are too pretty and sweet to remain single."

Miriam laughed, and, kissing him, tripped back toward the house again. She sighed as she thought that unless Grant would learn to love her she could never marry; for how could her great love for him wane in her heart and give place for the love of another?

Tom lay back in his hammock and wondered if she did love some one. Just a year back she had nothing to say upon that subject and seemed to care as little about it as he himself. Now she had changed for some reason and was always ready to converse upon that subject. She was either in love or approaching womanhood had caused her to turn her thoughts toward the future.

But Thomas was not in the habit of ruminating much on the affairs of the heart, so he soon turned

over in his hammock and tried to go to sleep, in defiance of the mosquitos. In this, however, he failed, so he lay in his hammock very quietly and turned his thoughts upon the ball at Señor Aracajo's, which event was to take place soon.

Soon he heard two of the Indian laborers on the plantation conversing near him. As the shrubbery concealed him and he had learned a part of their language, he lay very still and listened.

"We are all ordered to meet to-night at midnight at the home of Señor Paoquaz," said one. "Señor Paoquaz will tell us what to do, as the President doesn't seem to want to help us."

"Very well; I will be there," said the other. "If the President doesn't act we will."

"I guess I'll act too," muttered Tom as he heard the Indians going on their different ways. "I know it is a breach of etiquette to attend any event where you are not invited and the invitations are not general, but I suppose that in a time of conspiracy those formalities are dispensed with. Grant, Hamilton and McCain have all had their share of the fun, now I guess it is my time," and Tom turned over and went to sleep, after these comforting reflections.

That night, without a word to any one, he mounted his horse and rode toward the residence of Paoquaz. In an hour or two he was in the back country and a short while after he reined his horse into the woods on one side of the road and tied him where no passer-by would see him.

He knew just how the land lay, for he had often visited at the hacienda belonging to Paoquaz. He know that the leader would entertain his guests

upon the veranda, as it was long and broad and would accommodate more people than any room in the house. But even the veranda would not hold the great crowd that was sure to be present. Some would have to occupy benches in the yard, under the grove of trees.

Tom also knew that the only place he could get to see and hear without being seen or heard would be under the veranda, where Paoquaz and San Miguel would in all probability stand to make their speeches. So he drew nearer the house, and, making an opening in the underbrush that lined the clearing wherein the house sat, he peered through. By the moonlight he could see Paoquaz and his family gathered upon the veranda awaiting the arrival of their guests.

Tom drew back and began to make a wide, circuitous tour of the house, keeping well out from the clearing where the trees had been left standing. When he had, as he supposed, arrived at the rear of the house he peered through the underbrush again and saw that the way was clear. Noting this fact, he walked boldly out into the opening and on toward the house, with his eyes wide open to see any person that might observe him.

But the family were all upon the front side of the house and the servants were busy in the kitchen, so he escaped detection. When he had arrived at the rear veranda he stooped down and crawled under the house. When he had crawled almost under where Paoquaz sat he moved more cautiously and seated himself upon a rock.

He then looked at his watch and saw that it was half past eleven. At the same moment he heard

Paoquaz welcoming the first arrivals, among whom were Roderigo and San Miguel.

After that the guests came in a steady stream. Tom lay upon his breast and scanned their faces by the moonlight as they came up the walk. He saw nearly all his father's hands and the men from the mines, and knew a great many that had ridden all the way from San Samanca, including soldiers from the army that Hamilton now commanded.

Promptly at twelve o'clock Paoquaz threw open the dining room doors and invited those that could get seats to dine and the rest to follow at the second and third tables. The high-toned and wealthy ate at the first table.

Tom moved his position so as to hear what was said in the dining room. Every one, without a single exception, were for the annihilation of the Americans, and when the wine began to flow there arose cries of "Down with the Americans!" "Long live Paoquaz, our future Dictator!" and "Death to the Americans!"

"Their object, it seems to me," Tom said to himself, "is not only a revolt against the Americans, but a rebellion against the government as well."

After supper Paoquaz was called upon to address them, and he arose and said:

"My countrymen—people of my race: We are here to-night to decide whether we shall stand together as brethren in the defence of our liberties or go down in history as the cowardly sons of brave sires! Some may doubt that we have any cause to war against our neighbors. Look about you and see. Our civil and our religious liberties are

taken from us by,—how can I say it without a tear of shame?—by foreigners, allied with the whites of our own country against us.

"Our gods have spoken. They call us fools and cowards, and so we are unless we stand side by side and drive the invader from our land and wrest the governing powers from the hands of the native whites.

"We have spoken with the President and he will not make any promises at all. But whether he helps us or not, we will go alone and fight the Americans, then we will turn against our enemies in San Samanca and will seize from them the governing power, which, as the first natives of this land, is our inalienable right. We want men of our own race to say what we shall do and shall not do."

Paoquaz sat down amidst cries of "Long live Paoquaz, Dictator of Maraquapez!" and San Miguel arose.

"I have been asked to command you the night we strike for liberty," he said, "and I have accepted the honor. From now on till the night of the 14th you must go on about your business the same as ever. On that night you will assemble here and I will organize you and give you arms. The line of march will be first to the mines, then to the plantations of the Americans and from there to the capital, where we will attack the army and take possession of the capitol building."

The people replied to this speech by cries of, "Long live San Miguel, the commander-in-chief of the Maraquapez army!"

Soon afterward the people were dismissed. Tom

waited under the house until the guests had all departed and the inmates of the house had gone to bed. Then he crawled out very quietly, and, after finding his horse, rode hurriedly for home, where he was soon reposing in the arms of Morpheus.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ball at Señor Aracajo's came off as scheduled, and the entire party of American friends attended. Tom took Grant aside when he came and informed him of what he had heard and seen at the hacienda of Paoquaz.

"Only what I expected," said Grant, "and I think I will be prepared to give them battle. McCain has received a telegram from McCarthy, his captain, stating that he has the men and arms and will land them at our wharf on the night of the 14th, which you say is the night of the strike. If nothing prevents McCarthy from getting here by that time we will pull the men over to the mines on the train in time to participate in the battle."

"Where is our friend, Mr. McCain?" the President asked of Miriam after dancing a waltz with her. "I have not seen him of late."

"He has gone away," replied Miriam, "and is not expected to return."

"I am sorry, but I heard that he did not like the country much, nor the people, and that they did not like him much."

"Oh, that was a mistake, your Excellency. He was admired by every one."

There was a trace of anger in Miriam's reply. Surely the man was very impolite to make so broad an assertion.

"Including yourself? if I may be so bold."

"Oh, yes. He and I were good friends."

"Ferdinand," said Madame Laredo some time later when she was alone in the conservatory with McCain, "I wish you would not be so attentive to Miss Hempstead. I do not like it and besides the people are all noticing it." The hen-pecked husband promised, and smiled significantly at Hamilton, who came in with the Señorita Inez on his arm. Hamilton replied with a smile equally as significant and which asked him politely to repair to some other part of the building. The obliging President did as the smile suggested and took Madame Laredo along also.

"What a pity I am married and can't do as I please," he thought, "this is a warning to me never to take unto myself a wife. Now there is Hamilton enjoying himself as well as one might while if I look at a girl my wife spurs me."

In the conservatory Hamilton was alone with his fair one and he lost no time in becoming better acquainted.

"I have been away on the frontier so long, señorita, that when I return I am surprised to find you changed into a beautiful lady—'the fairest in all this assembly.'"

"You flatter me, General."

"No, Señorita, I do not—because I love you."

"I love another, General."

"Who is it? That American dog?"

"Mr. Hamilton is a gentleman, and in my presence you must speak of him as such."

Then Hamilton, unable to keep the secret from her any longer, tore off his moustache and clasped her in his arms.

"I don't care what Grant will say," he said, "I just have to tell you how I love you," and replacing the moustache Hamilton told her all about how he loved her and the affair, first making her promise to keep the secret. When they returned again to the ball room Madame Laredo remarked to McCain that it looked as if the general was in mind of marrying again.

Mean while Grant was having an adventure himself. Tom had spoken with him out in the shrubbery and after Tom left Grant sat down upon a settee to smoke and think over his plans to thwart the Indians' murderous designs. As the leadership had been left with him he thought that he alone would be to blame for any disaster that might occur.

Grant was sitting near the street. He had not been there long before two men coming from opposite directions met near him and began to converse in a low tone. Grant made out the words "Americans" and "come to my house" and when they left he followed them up the street, for he had recognized one to be Roderigo, one of the ring leaders of the revolution.

They stopped in front of Roderigo's house and talked a moment. Then they went in together, while Grant when he came up examined the house to see if he would be able to eavesdrop the pair without being seen. He saw the men go into the parlor, where a light was burning and seat themselves. He noted that the front window of the room was up and a screen had been placed near. Seeing this to be his only chance of getting further information regarding their plans, he slipped

in at the window and sat down by the screen which had also shielded his entrance.

In the light of the parlor lamp Grant made out the man with Roderigo to be his foreman on the plantation, who had charge of the entire business, while Roderigo was staying in town.

"Are you sure you understand now?" Roderigo was saying. "You are to go to the Bunyan Arms Company in Galveston, and see that the 300 rifles are promptly packed in the barrels marked salt and shipped by the steamer due here on the afternoon of the 14th. I have sent my order, but I am afraid they will delay shipment if I do not send some one to hurry them up. What noise was that?"

Both men jumped to their feet and looked around. Grant had accidently dropped his revolver on the floor, and knowing that it would not do to run because the Indians would change their plan of attack and catch him unexpectedly, he merely stood still debating in his mind what to do if they should come back there.

Roderigo sprang toward the screen and reached it in one bound. The overseer started forward also, but both men stopped when they observed that a revolver was pointed toward each of them.

"Well, gentlemen," said Grant coming from behind the screen and again assuming his bantering tone, "I am ordinarily too much of a gentleman to play the part of a spy, but as you are well aware the times are troublesome and a man must resort to means of saving his life and the lives of his friends that in peaceful times he would not do for less reasons. I will ask you to kindly lay your re-

volvers on the floor with the butt end pointed in my direction. Now," he continued as this was done, "just step back a few paces."

The surprised men were forced to obey and Grant coming forward with his eyes still upon them, kneeled and placed his own revolvers by the side of the two belonging to his captives. Then he put the others' weapons in his after pockets. Just as he turned aloose of these and was about to pick up his own Roderigo sprang forward. With a movement quick as lightning Grant picked up his pistols from the floor and covered the Indian before he could reach him.

"I will ask you to go back to your former position," he said. "Now I will ask you both to walk up this bye-street a short distance in front of me. I am not a desperate man except upon occasions, and this is one of those occasions. So I will tell you what it will be necessary to do in order to reach the President's mansion alive."

"You intend to take us before the President?" inquired Roderigo glancing up quickly.

"Yes."

"Then you are indeed a desperate man. Our liberation will be effected the moment you take us before the President. He is a good friend of mine, and will believe my word in preference to yours."

"The President likes you well. So well in fact that he shall insist upon your remaining as his guest for a few days."

"You have a warrant for our arrest?"

"I have not, but the President will make that request. Now this is what I propose to do. If one of you run a step or whisper a word on the

street I will blow you into pieces where you stand —that is all, move on."

Side by side Grant marched them up the bye-street, which was deserted, and would have been pitchy dark were it not for the moon. No one passed them and Grant made his captives go right upon the porch of the President's mansion and ring the door bell.

"Has his Excellency returned?" Grant asked the servant.

"No, Señor, he is still at the ball."

"Then show us into his ante-chamber, and when he comes tell him that Señors Grant, Roderigo and Rialto wish to see him on important business."

The servant bowed and ushered them into the ante-chamber. Grant kept his weapons concealed while the servant was near, but after he had gone away he brought them out again, and the three sat and waited in silence. It was a long wait, but McCain and Madame Laredo accompanied by Hamilton came at last, and after Madame Laredo had retired to her room McCain and Hamilton went in to see the callers.

"Your Excellency," said Grant rising, "allow me to introduce our friends the Señors Roderigo and Rialto."

"Señors, I am pleased to receive you. I think, however, that we have met before," and McCain detached his false moustache while Hamilton did the same.

Roderigo stared at them in blank surprise. This was the man they had offered the dictatorship of Maraquapez!

"You may as well let us go," said Roderigo, "you have us foiled. The revolution is broken."

"Not exactly," said Grant. "It will pay us Americans to bide our time and strike this revolution a blow it will never recover from. If we let you off as it is, in a fortnight, you would steal down upon us as you intend to do and murder us in our sleep. You will sit down and write just what I dictate.

"Feeling uneasy about that shipment of arms," he dictated when Roderigo took the seat by the writing desk, "I have decided to accompany Rialto to Galveston. We leave on the steamer to-night, and will see that the arms get to you all right."

"Now sign your name," said Grant, "and address it to Paoquaz. That is all right. I will mail it for you, and I will stop on my way home and tell your housekeeper that you have taken a sudden notion to go to Galveston, and will be back soon. Now, Mac, we will take them to some strong room and lock them up until this little business is over. You and Hamilton will see to their personal comfort, and as it is getting late I will bid you good night."

CHAPTER XVII.

On the evening of the 14th everything was quiet in San Samanca, and nothing implied that Maraquapez was on the eve of a great insurrection.

Nothing was thought of the question addressed by Paoquaz to the clerk in the freight department of the steamship line late that afternoon on the wharf, asking if some barrels of salt had been unloaded for him. One or two people standing near did look up as the question was asked. They wondered why Paoquaz was so interested in salt.

Paoquaz interpreted the wonder in the looks and added to the clerk that his employees had no salt and were clamoring for it, and that if it had come he would send it on out. The clerk replied that the salt was there and he might get it at any time he chose. Paoquaz said his wagon would not get to town until seven or eight, but the moment it came he would send it around.

"Did any passengers come with the vessel named Roderigo or Rialto?" he asked.

"No one was on board," replied the clerk, "but the officers and crew."

Paoquaz muttered an oath in an undertone. It was apparent to him that the two had run away to keep from fighting.

"Why didn't you buy some salt from the San

Samanca merchants if you were out, Señor?" asked Hamilton, who by design was one of those standing near.

"Well, I'll tell you, General. The salt they handle here is not of the best grade."

About an hour later Hamilton, who still strolled about the wharf, saw the supposed salt loaded into the wagon, and heard Paoquaz tell the driver to take the Bayasco road. Hamilton was not surprised to recognize in the driver one of the most rebellious of the natives employed at the mines.

He went direct from the wharf to the nearest telephone and called up Grant.

"Your shipment of meat has arrived, Señor Grant," he told him, "and will be sent to you over the Bayasco road."

"All right, General," replied Grant. "Thank you for your trouble. Will you kindly see after some machinery and soap due at the mining company's wharf at nine?"

"Yes! Oh, it's no trouble. Good-bye."

A few moments later a freight train drew up at the depot and switched off onto the track leading to the mining company's wharf up the coast. McCain had arrived, and he and Hamilton boarded the train.

The yacht had arrived an hour before, and the two hundred workmen and the arms were waiting on the wharf when the train drew up. They were a jolly set of men with a joke for everything but Hamilton remarked to himself that they would not be so jocular if they knew the extent of the night's work before them."

The arms and ammunition were loaded into the

rear car, and the two hundred workmen were ordered to fall into the two cars in front, which they did without any discipline whatever.

Hamilton signalled the engineer to go ahead, and a few moments afterward the freight was pulling through San Samanca at the rate traveled by the fast mail in the States. Soon after the lights of San Samanca only could be seen as they shot by the coffee and sugar plantations on their route.

McCain and Hamilton had discarded their false hair and moustache before boarding the train. They now sat with the miners in the freight cars and talked together over the situation. They complimented Grant upon the success of his plans, and declared that with the three hundred rifles in the train, and the three hundred belonging to the Indians that Grant and Tom Hempstead had gone to capture, they could easily hold their fortifications at the mines that night.

The freight dashed along at terrific speed as the engineer had been ordered until about half of the distance to the mines had been covered. Then it was brought suddenly to a standstill, and McCain glancing out the car door learned the reason why. Fully fifty Indians armed to the teeth had stopped the train, and were detaching the rear car where the arms and ammunition had been placed.

Hamilton gave an exclamation of wrath, and thrust his revolver out the door to shoot at two or three of the revolters standing near. But McCain drew him back.

"Don't do that," he said, "you and I are the only ones here that are armed, and if you attract

their fire we will all be killed like rats in a trap. Let them have the guns. Grant and Tom Hempstead will capture their own."

Hamilton saw the force of this argument and put up his pistol. The Indians detached the rear car and signalled the engineer to go ahead. The engineer who was covered with guns threw open the throttle again and the train dashed into Velasco with the rear car half way back upon the track. McCain and Hamilton lost no time in arming the men and going back, but the Indians had unloaded the car and were gone, leaving the empty car upon the track.

Very much chagrined at the loss the two young men had the car attached and carried back to Velasco where they waited for Grant and Tom Hempstead.

* * * * * *

A heavy wagon drawn by four horses and driven by an Indian teamster rolled heavily over the Bayasco road at the moment the train was held up by the fifty revolutionists. The horses were already tired and wet with sweat, while the sleepy driver nodded in his seat. Suddenly a voice in his ear made him wide awake:

"Turn to your right at the next fork, Manuel, and drive to the mines."

Manuel started and looked around. He jumped in astonishment when he saw Grant and Tom Hempstead sitting behind on the barrels and toying with their revolvers.

"Señor Grant!" he exclaimed.

"Don't guess again," said Grant. "You seem to be enjoying yourself very well dancing. I let

you and the rest of the native workmen at the mines off to go to a dance. I see, however, that you have a better way of enjoying yourself. Just turn to the right there, will you."

"The cause is lost!" cried Manuel.

"Not lost," corrected Tom Hempstead. "You see there are two causes. One is the cause of fanatics thirsting for the blood of innocent people—women, children and all. The other is the cause of an honest, thrifty people who have settled in your country and attended strictly to their own business, and who can fight when it is necessary. The last named cause will win."

"The gods may strike me dumb if we ever intended to smite your women and children."

"The gods may inflict on me the same punishment if I ever intend to permit your people to torture a sister of mine. I will shoot them with my own hand before I let them be insulted and tortured by a merciless band of pagans."

"Well, Grant," said McCain, as they drove up, "I don't know how they managed to find out about our plan, but the enemy did, and have taken all the arms and ammunition from us."

"That will be all right," Grant replied cheerfully, "we will have enough with these captured guns to whip them. It was just an even trade, and no side beat."

The miners had gathered around the wagon anxious to know about the trouble, and the mysterious way in which the young men had been acting aroused their curiosity and fear. Grant glanced over the force. They were not half the numbers of the Indians, and half or nearly half

of them were negroes. But Grant knew that one American white man was worth three Indians, and a negro was as good as one of them, so he was not afraid of the disparity in numbers.

"Men," he said, standing up where they could all see him, "I wish to explain to you just how matters stand. We are threatened by a fierce outbreak of the Indians who have been incensed at the American incursion on their lands all along. I have known of this intended outbreak for some time and I could have warned you. But I am a great believer in the propriety of sticking to what you have once attached yourself to. I have not held you here to make you fight in defence of our possessions here. I could have spoken with the American consulate and obtained all the protection necessary, but I have a better plan, and while I do not think any man of you will want to back away and concede to the Indians the ability to drive American citizens where they please, I can obtain for you a promise from the Indians allowing you to leave the country if you do not wish to fight."

"I have arms for every man of you, and all who wish to take them up in defence of these mines will step across this line."

Grant made a line on the ground, and every man walked over it.

"Very well," said Grant; "by that I understand that you mean to fight."

"Yes!" they cried in chorus.

"That is the true American spirit. We will all go over to the big machine shop, where the arms

will be issued out to you, and your positions taken."

After their arms had been given them, and the men all stationed in the three machine shops and the post-office, Grant returned to the house and found Hamilton all booted and spurred in anticipation of the "fun" that night. McCain was sitting at the desk writing poetry, and Collins, in an almost ineffectual attempt to appear as disinterested as they, was apparently reading a newspaper upside down. Tom had gone to bring Mr. Hempstead and the girls over to the mines, where they would be safe during the outbreak.

"Come and go down with me to interview the prisoners, boys," Grant commanded, and they followed him to the basement.

"Well, Laredo," said Grant, "your schemes are all about frustrated, so we will give you your liberty in about a half hour."

"So, you think you have torn up my work. We shall see when you give me my freedom."

"All right. You will be at liberty in about half an hour by Mr. Collins' watch. General Rioja, I have always esteemed you as a gentleman who has some conception of and always try to follow out the ideas of justice. We have learned something that will be of importance to you, inasmuch as you are ready to fight for your country at any time. We have learned that when the Indians have annihilated us, which disaster we intend to prevent, if possible, they intend to fall upon the white natives of Maraquapez and seize the capital city, thereafter declaring martial law and appointing Paoquaz Dictator."

"It's a lie they are telling you to get you to help them, Rioja!" exclaimed Laredo. "The Indians are well pleased with the government as it is. They want—what all true patriots should want—the total extermination of these foreigners."

"Don't forget, Laredo, that you have not mixed in the society of your fellow men much of late, and consequently are not much informed on current events," said McCain.

"Say, old fool, you keep quiet any way," said Hamilton; "I haven't squared up with you for that villainous way you treated me in the temple, and it ain't too late yet."

"Will you swear to this, Mr. Grant?" inquired Rioja.

"I will with pleasure," replied Grant, with all the faith in the world in Tom's veracity.

"Then I am with you."

"You swear, then, to aid us in this enterprise with the army?"

"I do."

"Then you are at liberty again. Now I want you and Hamilton to go to San Samanca as fast as the No. 9 will carry you. When you get there, go direct to the capitol and ring the bell, and when the people and the army have assembled, speak to them, telling them of this man's baseness and the intentions of the Indians. After this suggest that De Callabaro be made President, and if this is done, bring the army down here as fast as it can be done."

"I promise to carry out these instructions to the letter, Señor Grant, upon my honor as a soldier and a gentleman."

"Then go; and you go, too, Hamilton, to assist him. The No. 9 is waiting in the yards for you and will bring the soldiers back. Don't delay."

Hamilton and the General were soon flying through the country at full speed on the No. 9.

"There is some one signalling ahead to stop," said the engineer once to Hamilton. "By the lantern and moon I make them out to be Indians. What must I do?"

"Throw open your throttle and drop flat on your faces," replied Hamilton. "They find that it pays them to interrupt our passage to and fro from San Samanca and Velasco."

The engineer gave his throttle a turn, and the four men lay flat on their faces while the No. 9 dashed forward at a dangerous rate. As they passed the Indians there was a confusion of yells that were soon lost to hearing, and a fusillade of bullets struck the engine cab.

"Check her up, man!" ordered Hamilton. "The danger is past."

The engineer sprang to his post and diminished the speed somewhat, but still the train rattled along the rails at a dangerous rate. Suddenly Hamilton caught sight of lights glimmering in the near distance.

"San Samanca at last!" he cried. "Now, General, our night's work begins!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

BEFORE the hour the Indians were expected to begin their attack, the little party of Americans gathered in the office of the largest of the machine shops, as that was conceded to be the safest stronghold.

As the largest stockholders, McCain and Grant were allowed to see after the defence of the garrison, and as Grant was the better informed of the two on all pertaining to military tactics, McCain left him in full command and joined the rest of the party in the machine shop.

Tom and Mr. Hempstead were talking with the elder girls, trying to convince them that it would be almost impossible for the Indians to force them from the retreat they had just chosen. Miriam, who had been barred from the discussions of these elders from babyhood, sat in a corner of the room by herself and listened. As McCain had not appeared in her presence since he had thrown away his disguise and returned to the mines, he expected to give her a surprise when he entered. But Lillian and Mabel were also surprised, and were clamorous in their desire to know where he had been.

"Tom will explain," McCain replied to their question, and went over and sat down my Miriam. She held out her hand to him.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. McCain," she said graciously. "When did you return?"

"This evening," he answered her. Since he had been in her presence he had grown a little paler than usual, and by the gas light his eyes looked stern and serious.

"You have returned at a very opportune moment," she said.

"So it seems," he said, lowering his voice; "and it is well that I did not trust you to send for me when you were in danger."

"Oh, I could not force myself to ask such a sacrifice of you."

"You see now, then, that I intend to remain by your side until the trouble is over or I am dead. I intend to do all that uninvited."

"Thank you. I acknowledge that I feel much safer while you are near."

"Miriam——" McCain looked a moment appealingly into her eyes and then gazed sadly out of the window. "God knows," he continued, "I would make any sacrifice for your sake! After this trouble is over, I will go away never to return, and though I will sometimes pore over my misfortune, I will remember your kindness and be charitable to the world and good. This will all seem like a dream, and though the awakening was hard, I will always cherish in my memory your own sweet self and these halcyon days when you were even kind to me, for 'my life is a sweeter, sadder thing for having known you,' and:

"'"'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than to have never loved at all.'"

Miriam continued to look down and toy with her fan, and he, as he gazed into her dark brown eyes a moment, felt the impulsive, passionate yearning.

"You deserve better than I," she said, looking up; "you are manly, brave and good, while I—I am not deserving of any good man's love. Let us change the subject—it can but be painful to us both as long as things are as they are."

"Very well—but I wished to tell you that we have been deceiving you. I have not been any farther away than San Samanca."

"Is that so? Why, Tom told me you had gone away on your yacht."

"That was a story we coined as an excuse. The yacht went away, but neither Hamilton nor I went with it."

"Where were you staying? No one ever mentioned to me of having seen you in the city."

"And yet I was seen. Did you not see me on the day of the parade, when the President was offered the dictatorship of Maraquapez?"

"I did not; but believing you were gone away, I did not look for you."

"Did you see the President?"

"Yes."

"Well, you saw me—I was the President." Miriam looked at him with a puzzled expression, so he proceeded to explain. "The real President was a prisoner in the basement of our house yonder," he said, "and with the assistance of a false moustache, I took his place."

"Did you not know it was dangerous?"

"Yes, but I did not care—did you?"

"Certainly. I do not love to see my friends rush into danger. You say you love me—could you make me a promise to prove your devotion?"

"Anything."

"Then promise me to not be reckless from now on. Did you live at the President's mansion?"

"Yes; Hamilton, playing the part of General Rioja while the General was also our prisoner, was there also."

"And Madame Laredo? Was she not there—did she not discover the truth?" The girl looked up quickly—a shade of wonder expressed by her innocent brown eyes.

"Madame Laredo," said McCain, answering what he knew she would like to have answered, "is a very good woman, and I esteem and admire her. She left the day after we came on a visit to her father in the country. But even then Hamilton and I were so afraid that she would find out the truth, we had her arrange us a room on the opposite side of the building from her own. Happily she was not at home long enough to find us out."

A low sigh of gladness was all that Miriam answered to this. "A sweeter, purer girl never breathed this God-forsaken country's air," thought McCain.

"Tell me all about Mr. Grant's plans as you have been carrying them out," she said.

McCain related all that had occurred, which had been kept a secret from the girls in order not to have them alarmed before it was necessary. When he mentioned that Hamilton and Rioja had gone to San Samanca to inform the people

of the state of affairs and suggest that De Callabaro be asked to accept the Presidency, she interrupted him.

"Do you think that Señor De Callabaro will accept?" she asked.

"Yes; I think that since the country is badly in need of him, he will accept. And I know, furthermore, that the white people will stand by him, one and all."

"Oh, Lillian, did you hear? Mr. McCain says that General Rioja and Mr. Hamilton will offer Señor De Callabaro the Presidency, and that he will accept."

"Tom has just told me," replied the elder sister.

"Why is that so important to Lillian?" McCain asked.

"Haven't you heard? Lillian and Señor De Callabaro are engaged."

"I had not heard a word about it. I might have guessed as much, though, when I noticed that the Señor was a frequent visitor at your house."

"Lillian was once disappointed in love. She loved a young New York lawyer, and he died. She will make the señor a good kind wife, but I don't think she loves him much."

"She cannot, if she loved as I have loved," said McCain, glad to get back to the old subject. "People may talk all this nonsense about loving two or three girls, but it won't do. There are some men who are not given the power and force of heart to love. They talk about putting the old love by, but it can't be done in real love."

Grant came in at this moment, and all eyes were turned on him as he stood erect, partly in the shadow of the door.

McCain thought that he was very handsome—the broad-shouldered and broad-minded man—truly American. American in his ideas of the equality of men and justice to all alike; American in his industry and thrift; American in his love for country; in his honor and respect for womankind.

There was none of the haughty pride and insolence of the man of education and travel in the Old World in him. He was modern in everything—just as his country was the most modern of the globe. The Old World has never fully grasped what the quick intelligence of the philosophers of the New World grasped first—that men are brothers and therefore equal all the world over. That men are moulded of the same clay, and are all journeying toward the same goal—death.

Grant stood erect. The muscles of his shoulders stood out like those of an athlete. His face wore a serious, thoughtful expression, and his steel gray eyes assumed the cool steady look of a man who does not fear, and who does not pick his men; but, like the true American, has the grit to fight any man that offends him.

McCain's gaze passed slowly from the face of his old friend to that of the girl beside him. Her eyes were on Grant, too, and in them were expressed all her trust and love for him.

"Have you posted all your men, Grant?" asked Tom.

"Yes—only one duty remains and that is the

hoisting of our colors. As Miss Miriam is a very patriotic girl, I will allow her that honor. The pole and all are ready on the roof, and I will ask you all out to see the ceremony."

Grant led the way toward the flat roof, and all followed but Mabel. She, too, had hopes of love, but her younger sister's conquests were more numerous than her own, and this last token of choice had informed her how her hopes would be wrecked. So she remained alone in the office, and in that sad moment crushed the budding flame and turned bravely on the world again. She was glad she had not confided in a soul, but she quoted to herself that:

"Man's love is of his life a part,
'Tis woman's whole existence."

Upon the roof Miriam grasped the rough cord and quickly raised the bunting to the top of the pole, amidst the cheers of the party.

The workmen in the shops heard their cheering and saw the flag flying, and immediately the building shook with the sound of their huzzas. Then across the moonlit air came the words of "Columbia" and "The Star Spangled Banner." Suddenly from the farthermost machine shop, where the negroes were stationed, Grant heard the song of "Dixie," and he glanced at McCain. The young Southerner was listening intently.

"That's our fighting song," McCain said grimly. "It thrills the Southerner more than any other—even when our banner is the Stars and Stripes."

Scarcely had the party reached the threshold of the office again when the sound of rapid firing was heard.

"They have fired on the American flag," said Grant smiling, "and they will learn how Americans can defend that flag."

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEGRO in the lower machine shop had thrust his head out of the window to watch the Indians as they marched up to the base of the hill whereon Velasco was situated. A hundred Indians fired at him and he had dropped dead. That started the battle.

The three machine shops commanded a view of all of the outhouses, and Grant, who knew the Central American Indian to be almost as dangerous as the Sioux or Comanches, had posted sharpshooters, whose especial duty was to see that none of the buildings were fired, and to kill every man of the enemy that attempted it. Early in the battle two Indians, formerly in Grant's employ, tried to set fire to the office and residence. The result was that all were shot dead in their tracks. Soon after two or three more attempted to burn the office, and they met the same fate.

Meanwhile the main body of Indians, on finding the Americans were better fortified than they supposed, made a rush for a ditch that ran parallel to most of the machine shops, and which proved an excellent trench for them. Protected by the walls of this ditch, the Indians fired at intervals at the windows of the machine shops, but except when a miner unwisely showed himself too much at the window, no one was hurt.

The Indians had come there expecting but lit-

let resisatnce. They expected to soon conquer over the small numbers of the Americans, and then continue their devastatious raid.

When they learned on the contrary that the Americans were well prepared and were a good match, even with less numbers, the Indians became desperate a while, until they learned that they could not make anything by it. Then they lay in the ditch and proposed plans for the dislodgment of the Americans. Paoquaz and San Miguel ran back and forth, trying to urge them on, but no man among their number stirred.

San Miguel thought of a plan. Just in front of the main body of his men, and about half of the distance to the large machine shop, there lay a large oaken beam. The double wooden door of the machine shop was on the nearest side of him, too. San Miguel thought that if he took about two or three hundred men and charged with the beam, using the latter as a battering ram, he might be able to break in the door. If he did not succeed the first time he could back and try again. Better to sacrifice men than to go away in defeat.

So he called his men together, told them of his plan and called for volunteers. Fully four hundred cried "I."

"Then follow me," cried San Miguel.

Grant's men fired into the mass as they came out of the ditch and strewed dead bodies all the way from the trench. But the Indians picked up the beam and ran the end of it against the shop. The whole building trembled at the force of the blow, and a hole the size of the beam was split in the door, but it did not fall.

Grant, who had run down stairs when he saw their intention, looked at the door and mentally decided that it would not hold out long. So he called to Collins standing at the head of the stairs and ordered him to command every person down stairs.

The men started for the stairs at a rush, but their respect held them back until the ladies, leaning upon the arms of Mr. Hempstead, Tom and McCain, had passed. Then they followed in a mass with their rifles protruding from the crowd in all directions. Then a loud crash was heard as they reached the first floor, and the door fell down, amidst the yells of the partly triumphant Indians.

Grant's plan had been to hold the door when it fell, but it was mistaken by his men, who thought he intended to retreat to the woods. A door in the rear had been opened, and the miners surged out and ran for the forest as fast as they could go. It was in vain for Grant to call them to come back, so he followed in the rear, and collecting them again in the woods, poured a galling fire into the Indians in the ditch.

McCain's moment had come. When the door was opened and the miners made a rush for it, he grabbed Miriam up in his arms, pushed his way out of the opening, and ran with her to the woods. Fearing the Indians were following in the rear, he ran with her far up the mountain side into the densest part of the woods, and at last sat her down upon the ground while he stood a moment to breathe.

"Go back and see after my sisters," said Miriam; "I am safe."

"Not yet," he replied, as he caught a glimpse of three Indians skirting the mountain side about a hundred yards to the left of them. "Get behind that rock. I see a part of the enemy."

Miriam did as commanded and together they watched the approach of the men. San Miguel was with them, and the three were looking all about as if in search of some one.

"Just what I thought," McCain murmured to himself; "San Miguel employs this method of securing a pretty and intelligent wife—by the force of arms." But he said nothing to arouse Miriam's fears.

"They are in here somewhere," the two behind the rock heard San Miguel say when the trio was not far away. "When we find them you are to shoot him and carry the señorita direct to my house. Do you understand?"

"Yes, General."

A shudder passed through Miriam's frame as these words were said, and McCain was uneasy lest she should in her fear betray their hiding place.

"Be brave," he whispered, "I will save you."

"Ah!" exclaimed one of San Miguel's men, as his eyes caught sight of the two behind the rock; and he raised his gun to fire.

But McCain fired first, and the Indian fell. There were only two left to contend with now. San Miguel saw the man and girl through the smoke and recognized them as only those he was in search of, so he came forward, firing at every

step, as McCain thrust his head around the side of the rock to shoot. Seeing that he was exposed any way, McCain stood up, and though he did not know it, Miriam stood up with him. The smoke had by this time become so dense that all three men stopped shooting until it should clear away. A gust of wind came and cleared it away so suddenly that all three of the duelists raised their weapons to fire at the same moment.

McCain fired point blank at San Miguel's servant and killed him, but at the same moment the ball from San Miguel's gun passed through his body and he fell at Miriam's feet.

San Miguel, seeing his purpose successful, ran forward to seize the girl. But McCain's thoughts had ever been of her, and he managed to raise himself to his elbow, even with his death-wound on him, and send the last bullet in his revolver through the heart of the Indian leader. So close had the shot been fired the powder burned San Miguel's face.

Miriam lifted McCain's head gently to her knee, but the poet's last day had come. In the moonlight he had slain the three Indians in her defence, but the Fates had willed that he should not live to be thanked by any one but her.

"Garland—good friend—dear brother!" Miriam cried in her sorrow at this fatal termination of the day's battle. "Tell me that you will not die!"

But McCain shook his head sadly.

"It is better as it is," he said; "life without you would be but a sad existence. Always remember me as one who was not bad at heart. I—I knew the good from the bad, and God will forgive

my sins as he has blessed you, my little angel. I was an unfortunate fellow all through life. But remember me because—God help me—I love you!"

And with these words the life of the poet went out, as his head rested on the knee of the girl he had learned to love above the world and all its pleasures. Miriam had dropped a tear on his forehead as he lay dying, and he had smiled his thanks.

The noise of the battle raging beneath had not been heard, as she laid the poet's body down and gazed sadly at his features, composed as if in sleep.

"Poor Garland!" said a tremulous voice at her elbow. "Dear old friend, good-bye. You were a true-hearted fellow, even if wild and reckless, and no Southern sun will ever shine upon another more true and brave of Dixie's sons. Good-bye, old friend, good-bye," and Grant, strong man and brave, kneeled down by Miriam's side and took a last lingering look at the features of his once good friend.

"Come, Miriam," he said rising, "I became uneasy and have been looking for you."

As the girl rose and stood before him, with the kind, sympathetic look of the woman, Grant could not hold back what had long been in his heart.

"Miriam!" he said, taking a step forward; Miriam!"

And over the body of the "Child of Destiny" their lips met in the first betrothal kiss, and their tears of joy were mingled as the poet would have wished.

"Listen, sweetheart," Grant said, raising his head; "it is the guns of the soldiers and the battle is won. It has been a horrible night, but the future will be clear and peaceful, and we shall be happy."

CHAPTER XX.

HAMILTON and General Rioja sprang from the train before it was fairly at a standstill in San Samanca, and ran up the main street of the town toward the capitol.

A crowd of men who had gathered on the Plaza and the streets that night, wondered, as they saw them running up the street, and followed behind, to discover if possible the cause of the excitement. Soon a great mob was at their heels, all clamorous to know the trouble.

Arriving at the capitol, Hamilton ran on inside and passed up the several flights of stairs to where the bell hung in the belfry, while Rioja halted on the steps and motioned for the crowds to stay back on the grounds and wait a while for an explanation of his conduct. Then for a few moments the old General stood like a statue carved of stone—silent and immovable.

Suddenly the great bell began to peal forth, and Hamilton, while he pulled at the heavy rope, looked down upon the city lying all around him. He could see the lights of the steamer and smaller craft in the harbor, and far up the coast the lights gleaming from the "Mayflower." In the moonlight he could make out the hulls of the vessels in the harbor and over the housetops he saw the fields of the planters and their haciendas.

In the distance a dark line denoted the forest, and still farther on he saw the large mass of dark that denoted the mountain range. At that place were his friends, and to that place he must hurry.

Meanwhile from the numerous houses poured the white inhabitants of San Samanca. They ran to where the crowd had gathered, and with dark, anxious faces inquired the cause of the excitement.

"Friends and countrymen," said Rioja, after a large crowd had collected, "while you have been sleeping, Maraquapez has been on the eve of a revolution. While you have been laughing and talking over your business and pleasure, your President has proved himself a traitor. A mob has been collecting to kill you and your women and children. This mob, aided by Laredo, your President, would take from the better citizens the supremacy and power, and establish a government of paganism and crime and monarchy.

"None of you have known that through all these years the Indians have secretly worshipped their false gods, and only attended the worship in yonder cathedral as a blind. This, an insult and a scorn to the Roman Catholic Church, is in itself deserving of your just anger. But that is not all.

"Your President has appeared to you a just and intelligent man, and a good Christian executive. My friends, we have been badly deceived all along. In Maraquapez there is no man living more ambitious and lawless, more unjust to his own race, or more shrewd for the good of himself rather than his people. He has proven him-

self a hypocrite and a scheming villain and has banded with the Indians against you.

"To-night Laredo was a prisoner to the Americans at the mines, but by now he has been freed and has gone to join the Indians. To-night the Indians, a thousand strong, will attack the Americans at the mines, and if they are successful there they will march to San Samanca, appoint either Paoquaz or Laredo dictator, and run the government thereafter to suit themselves.

"There is one man standing upon the steps near me now upon whom you can depend to guide you through this crisis, and be faithful to you ever. Let all cry, 'Long live De Callabaro, President of Maraquapez!'"

For a moment the people stood silent as if trying to grasp the situation. But the cry was started by some one and instantly it was taken up and repeated all through the mass of people until every man was crying it in his loudest tone. De Callabaro had long been the idol of the people, and deputations had often been sent to him, requesting that he accept the office of President, as made and promised by the white inhabitants. But the wise old statesman saw trouble with the Indians, who seemed to like Laredo better, because he was not so favorable to foreigners, and a long and bloody war, so he refused.

De Callabaro, who had gathered with the rest of the officials on the steps with Hamilton and Rioja, now came forward, hat in hand, and bowed to the people.

"Countrymen, I thank you," he said slowly but distinctly, "and while there is none more devoted

to his country than I, you have made a bad choice, in that I am not fitted for this position, nor worthy of this honor."

At this point in his speech De Callabaro was interrupted by cries of "You must accept," and other remonstrances against his refusing. When the noise subsided, he spoke on:

"But I realize as well as you do that it is a critical moment in the history of Maraquapez; and with a wish to serve my country more than I have hitherto done, I will accept and try to guide the State through this peril.

"But this is not the time to bandy words," he said when the cheering had died away again; "I continue the state officials in office just as they are. I command the Commander-in-Chief of the army, General Rioja, and the now second in command by my appointment, Brigadier General Hamilton, to march with the entire force of the standing army to Velasco and engage the Indians in battle there. I will call on the citizens for five hundred volunteers, and will appoint Alphonso Barcelona to marshal and command this force, arm them with guns from the arsenal and station them as guards of the capital city. All who wish to volunteer will please pass up the steps, one by one, and assemble in the Senate chamber."

At the order from the new President Generals Rioja and Hamilton rushed from the building and ran to the troops who had been marched from the arsenal and drawn up in the capitol grounds at the first warning sounds of the bell. They ran to the head of the long column and drawing

his sword, Rioja cried: "Forward! double quick!"

The mass of uniformed men moved down the street at a half trot. Rioja led the way to the depot where the train that had brought Hamilton and himself from the mines was standing waiting, to carry them back. At a signal the soldiers clambered into the box car that had been coupled on, and Hamilton, followed by Rioja, sprang into the engine cab and cried, "Turn her loose!"

The engineer, who from long service was not afraid of the liability of danger on the road, did as requested, and the No. 9 again sped over the long straight track at its former dangerous rate of speed.

When they had traversed over half the way back the engineer announced that he saw the lantern of the Indians that had tried to stop them when they were on their way to the city.

"Slow up—and stop when you get nearly there," Hamilton ordered; "they have torn up the rails."

When the train came to a standstill Rioja ordered his men to come out of the car and fall into line of battle. This was not necessary, however, for when the Indians saw the soliders they fled into the jungles without firing a shot.

Examination proved that the Indians had attempted to wreck the train, as Hamilton had surmised. Not over a distance of forty yards from where the train had been stopped the rails had been taken up, and if the train had gone on through as Hamilton first decided to do, they would have been wrecked. The two generals now were obliged to continue their journey on foot.

"Listen!" said Hamilton, as he marched with Rioja at the head of the long line of soldiers. "I hear the crack of Winchesters. The fight is on. Forward, men. Double quick!"

The command was repeated by the under officers all down the line, and soon the soldiers were going at a half trot down the narrow road. Nearer and nearer they approached until the mines were not a mile away and the roar of the rifles sounded clear and loud in the midnight air.

Suddenly they burst into the opening and a bloody sight was presented to their view. There was no need of the clear moonlight to aid their vision, for the large machine shop had been fired and the blaze lunging toward the high heavens lighted up the whole scene, and even threw rays of light into spots in the forest where the miners had fled from the big machine shop, and where rifle shots rang out from behind the trees and boulders.

Scattered in the opening, behind the cabins and in the ditches lay the bodies of dead Indians that had been picked off by the unerring aim of the sharpshooters and the rest of the workmen.

The two smallest machine shops and the post-office had held out against the enemy. Paoquaz, who was the only leader on the field, had tried the battering ram against these doors, but as all three were plated with solid iron, and were heavily barred, he was forced to give up the attempt after a severe loss.

A body of the Indians had gone into the woods in search of the fugitives that had sought refuge

in that place. As they were greatly at a disadvantage, most of these had returned and joined the main body in the ditch, who were shooting at any American that for a moment exposed himself.

When the roll of the drum was heard and the soldiers were seen coming to the rescue of the besieged, the Indians scattered and ran to the woods. But a great many fell by the guns of the soldiers, and among them was Laredo, the former President of San Samanca. After he was freed he knew that he had lost at San Samanca, and so he had joined with the Indians expecting to be made dictator when they had captured the capital city. His wounds were mortal, and the originator of all the trouble did not live but a few moments after he was hit.

"You have won over the enemies of Maraquapez, Señor Grant," said General Rioja, as Grant approached with Miriam, after the battle, hand in hand, "and in the name of his Excellency, De Callabaro, President of the Republic, I thank you and your brave followers."

THE END.

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